

expedite this work, discussion between our officials will be required at an early date. To this end, officials of the Federal-Provincial Relations Office will be getting in touch soon with their Newfoundland counterparts to discuss arrangements for such a meeting.

Yours sincerely,
Pierre Elliott Trudeau,
Prime Minister of Canada.

● (1405)

Senator Doody: What is the date of the letter?

Senator Perrault: It is dated October 20. It was tabled in the other place by Mr. Lalonde yesterday, November 24.

Senator Marshall: The Leader of the Government mentioned that officials from the federal government will be meeting with whom?

Senator Perrault: They will be in contact with their Newfoundland counterparts to discuss possible arrangements for a meeting.

Senator Marshall: Is there any indication that the Quebec government would be involved in those discussions?

Senator Perrault: I would be pleased to seek further information on that point. The letter is all I have in my possession at the present time.

Senator Doody: Is the letter dated October or November?

Senator Perrault: The letter is dated October 20 of this year, and it was tabled in the other place yesterday afternoon.

Senator Doody: Does the government leader know if any steps have been taken to get these meetings moving?

Senator Perrault: I will seek further information. As I stated to Senator Marshall, the letter is all I have in my possession at the present time.

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, this tabling should be seen in the context of the delayed answer I gave Senator Marshall yesterday to a question he had asked. While the answer I gave did not specifically refer to the letter, it did refer to the contents of the letter and the offer that was being made.

I know that Senator Marshall realizes, and perhaps Senator Doody does also, as well as many other senators, that the situation is complicated by the agreement, a private agreement. So while the right that is being given and being discussed is one that can be exercised in that frame, it cannot be exercised without being somewhat complicated by the terms of that agreement and that is a matter between the Province of Quebec and the Province of Newfoundland, separately.

At the risk of just speculating, I am sure that that, in turn, has something to do with the initiatives taken by Premier Peckford with reference to legislation he recently introduced in the Legislature of Newfoundland.

Senator Roblin: May I ask a supplementary question? In the letter as read, if I remember well, the Prime Minister stated that the federal government could not act in the normal course without reasonable proof, or words to that effect, that the exportation of electricity from Newfoundland was being presented by Quebec. My question is: In view of this request for proof, is it going to be the policy of the federal government to await the disposition of the long delayed law suit that is now in the court with respect to Newfoundland's claims, as well as the matter now placed before the courts with respect to recent legislation? Is it the policy of the government to wait until those court actions have been cleared up before it can accept the proof that it requires?

Senator Perrault: The question will be taken as notice.

BANKING, TRADE AND COMMERCE

COMMITTEE AUTHORIZED TO MEET DURING SITTING OF THE
SENATE

Hon. Royce Frith (Deputy Leader of the Government), with leave of the Senate and notwithstanding rule 45(1)(a), moved:

That the Standing Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce have power to sit while the Senate is sitting today and that rule 76(4) be suspended in relation thereto.

He said: Honourable senators, perhaps I should explain that the purpose of this motion is to enable the Banking, Trade and Commerce Committee to proceed at once to consider Bill C-6, the Bank Act, which was referred to it last night.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—WITNESSES

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Honourable senators, I had intended to ask questions of Senator Hays, the Senate Joint Chairman of the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution. As Senator Hays is not here, I will address my questions to the Leader of the Senate and ask him to get the information for me.

I should like to ask some questions about the activities of the committee. I trust I am within the rules in the way I frame them. First of all, I should like to know how many applications to be heard have been filed with the committee, and how many of these applicants have been selected to be heard. Secondly, I should like to know how many briefs have been filed with the committee.

Up to now we have heard only from associations, some of which are special interest groups. I am particularly interested