

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

THE CONSTITUTION

ESTABLISHMENT OF SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That a Special Joint Committee of the Senate and of the House of Commons be appointed to consult broadly with Canadians and inquire into and report upon the process for amending the Constitution of Canada, including, where appropriate, proposals for amending one or more of the amending formulae, with particular reference to:

- (i) the role of the Canadian public in the process;
- (ii) the effectiveness of the existing process and formulae for securing constitutional amendments; and
- (iii) alternatives to the current process and formulae, including those set out in the discussion paper prepared by the Government of Canada entitled "Amending the Constitution of Canada";

That twelve Members of the House of Commons and five Members of the Senate be the Members of the Special Joint Committee: such Members on the part of the House of Commons to be designated upon report of the Striking Committee no later than three sitting days after the adoption of this motion, which report shall be deemed concurred in upon presentation;

That the Committee have the power to appoint from among its Members such sub-committees as may be deemed advisable, and to delegate to such sub-committees all or any of their powers except the power to report directly to the House;

That the Committee have the power, to sit during sittings and adjournments of the House of Commons;

That the Committee, or a sub-committee, have power to travel, and hold public hearings, within Canada;

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses and to print such papers and evidence from day to day as may be ordered by the Committee;

That the Committee be empowered to authorize television and radio broadcasting, as it deems appropriate, of any or all of its proceedings or of proceedings of its sub-committees, pursuant to the principles and practices governing the broadcasting of the proceedings of the House of Commons;

That the parties represented on the Committee be granted allocations for expert assistance with the Committee work in proportion to the representation of the said parties in the House of Commons;

That the Committee be empowered to retain the service of professional, clerical and stenographic staff as deemed available by the Joint Chairmen;

That the Committee submit its report not later than July 1, 1991, provided that, if the House of Commons is not sitting, the report will be deemed submitted on the day such report is deposited with the Clerk of the House of Commons and with the Clerk of the Senate;

That changes in membership of the Committee be effective immediately after notification thereof, signed by the Member acting as Chief Whip of any recognized party, has been filed with the Clerk of the Committee;

That the quorum of the Committee be nine Members, whenever a vote, resolution or other decision is taken so long as both Houses are represented, and the Joint Chairmen are authorized to hold meetings, to receive evidence and authorize the printing thereof, when six Members are present so long as both Houses are represented; and

That a Message be sent to the Senate requesting that House to unite with this House for the above purpose, and to select, if the Senate deems it to be advisable, five Members to act on the proposed Special Joint Committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to propose the establishment of a Special Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Senate on the constitutional amending process.

I wish at the same time to table a discussion paper that examines the current amending formulae, identifies some problems in their operation and sets out for consideration by all members of Parliament a number of options for substantial reform.

Recent events have demonstrated that our present amending process is not adequate to ensure that Canada's Constitution can meet the challenges of the 21st century.

• (1120)

The initiative taken today by the government fulfils a commitment made last June, that before we try again to amend the Constitution we must find a better process to do it.

Amid the heat of Meech Lake and all the debate that surrounded it, there was a strong consensus on one thing: that we must find a better way to change the fundamental law of our land. Canadians want to be involved in the process of constitutional change. We in Parliament have an overriding responsibility to preserve this magnificent country. I know that members of this House of Commons and members of Parliament will do their utmost to ensure that Canada is preserved and enhanced for decades and generations and generations to come.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.