

THE SENATE

Tuesday, November 25, 1980

The Senate met at 2 p.m., the Speaker in the Chair.
Prayers.

REGULATIONS AND OTHER STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

STANDING JOINT COMMITTEE—CHANGE IN COMMONS MEMBERSHIP

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons to acquaint the Senate that the names of Messrs. McCauley, Bachand, Cousineau, Fraser and Weatherhead had been substituted for those of Messrs. Bloomfield, Chénier, Henderson, Hnatyshyn and Joyal on the list of members appointed to serve on the Standing Joint Committee on Regulations and other Statutory Instruments.

THE CONSTITUTION

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE—CHANGE IN COMMONS MEMBERSHIP

The Hon. the Speaker informed the Senate that a message had been received from the House of Commons to acquaint the Senate that the names of Messrs. Speyer, Beatty, Fraser, McCain, Thacker, Robinson (Burnaby) and Harquail had been substituted for those of Messrs. Epp, Dinsdale, Hawkes, Crombie, McGrath, Young and Henderson on the list of members appointed to serve on the Special Joint Committee on the Constitution of Canada.

DOCUMENTS TABLED

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government) tabled:

Copies of a letter from the Prime Minister of Canada to the Premier of Newfoundland, dated October 20, 1980, respecting the transmission of Newfoundland electrical energy through Quebec. (*English text*).

He said: This letter may be of special interest to Senator Marshall and other honourable senators who have asked questions about this matter. It is related to a response given here yesterday by the deputy leader.

Hon. Duff Roblin (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): May I ask my honourable friend if that letter can be read or is it going to be attached to the proceedings?

Senator Perrault: The text could certainly be incorporated into today's proceedings if that is satisfactory. I would be pleased to accept that suggestion.

Senator Marshall: May we get copies of it now?

Senator Perrault: Copies will be at the Table and we can certainly—

Senator Roblin: I offer the observation that it is the practice in some cases to provide a copy to the opposition at once so that there will be an opportunity to discuss any matters that may arise from it. I would ask my honourable friend if he would consider doing that.

Senator Asselin: I have asked the same question many times.

Senator Perrault: Under the circumstances, with leave, may I read this letter to the chamber?

Senator Asselin: In the future, send a copy in advance to the opposition.

Senator Perrault: I would be glad to, but—

Senator Asselin: Do it in the future.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, this letter is dated October 20. It is, then, not a letter issued yesterday; in fact, this communication has been in the possession of the Honourable Brian Peckford, the Premier of Newfoundland, since that date. It says:

My dear Premier:

This is in response to your letter of September 24, 1980, in which you reiterated your concerns about the federal government's willingness to use its constitutional authority to ensure the passage of Newfoundland electrical energy through Quebec.

In my letter of July 29, 1980, to you I indicated that the federal government stood ready to act if it could be clearly demonstrated that the exportation of electricity from Newfoundland was, in fact, being prevented by Quebec. This, as you will recall, was also the essence of my comments to you when we discussed the matter at the recent Conference of First Ministers on the Constitution.

I was very interested to learn that the Power Authority of the State of New York has indicated its willingness to purchase surplus power from your province if price and certain other requirements can be met. Although there are, I understand, many factors over and above the question of transmission through Quebec to resolve before formal contracts can be signed, this is an encouraging development.

As I am sure you appreciate, your request for federal government action to ensure transmission through Quebec raises many complex issues. Federal officials are giving priority to examining these issues and it is clear that to