

afternoon. I thank the honourable senator for bringing that to my attention.

Senator Phillips: We will give leave, honourable senators, on condition that the Deputy Leader of the Government will be responsible for maintaining the three quorums.

Senator Frith: That is difficult but it is fair.

The Hon. the Speaker: Is leave granted?

Hon. Senators: Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

SPECIAL JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE CONSTITUTION—REMARKS
BY SENATE JOINT CHAIRMAN

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz: Honourable senators, I have a question for the Leader of the Government. Having regard for the importance of the question of privilege raised by my colleague, Senator Bielish, could the Leader of the Government undertake to make every effort to have Senator Hays present in the chamber tomorrow to deal with that question?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, in the ordinary course, Senator Hays would be present tomorrow afternoon. I understand that the special joint committee will be sitting at approximately 3.30 p.m. tomorrow. I must say, however, that I have not read the entire transcript of the remarks which have been attributed to the honourable senator, and I do not think that any honourable senator would wish to pass judgment until we had the record before us. I do not intend to engage in any personal criticism or make any comment until I make sure that the facts are as outlined.

YUKON TERRITORY

THE CONSTITUTION—ENTRENCHMENT OF CHARTER OF RIGHTS
AND FREEDOMS

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz: I have a further question for the Leader of the Government. In an interview last Friday the Honourable John Munro acknowledged as valid the concerns of the Government of the Yukon Territory regarding its ability to control the economy of the Yukon should the new Charter of Rights become entrenched in the Constitution. It relates to the question that has been raised in the Northern Pipeline Committee and which I have raised with the Minister responsible for Economic Development.

The Government of the Yukon is joined by the Human Rights Commissioner, the Commissioner of Official Languages, the National Indian Brotherhood, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the National Action Committee on the

Status of Women, the Canadian Jewish Congress, and almost every other group to appear before the joint committee, in labelling the proposed charter as seriously flawed. Some have even had the audacity to refer to it as dangerous.

With that in mind—and I am referring not just to those reflections of the various interest groups, but also to the minister's comment—is the Government of Canada at least giving consideration to a total rewrite of the charter, given that it appears that mere amendments would be unlikely to rectify some of its substantial flaws?

Hon. Raymond J. Perrault (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, some time ago it was stated by the Right Honourable the Prime Minister, and other government spokesmen, including spokesmen in this chamber, that one of the values of forming a joint committee made up of able parliamentarians was to enable various interest groups and governments, associations and organizations to appear and make known their views. That process is now under way, and it is a valuable one. I am certain that the fair-minded people who make up that joint committee will listen attentively to the representations made to them by the representatives of the Yukon, and the weight that they wish to accord to those views will be reflected subsequently in a committee report to Parliament, which will then, of course, be debated in both chambers.

● (2030)

Senator Nurgitz: Honourable senators, the question, really, that I directed to the Leader of the Government was as to whether, in the light of such substantial criticism from so many quarters, any consideration has been given not just to making amendments, as the honourable leader suggests, but to a rewrite of the constitutional proposals. That, really, is the question.

Senator Perrault: Honourable senators, in my view it would be most unparliamentary for the government to announce that it is going to alter substantially its constitutional proposals before the committee of qualified parliamentarians studying those proposals has had a chance to report back with its recommendations. It would certainly be out of character for a government that believes in the democratic process for that government to initiate unilateral action to change its constitutional proposals before the joint committee has presented its report. However, the Prime Minister has stated many times that he is prepared to consider changes in the constitutional proposals if the weight of the evidence appears to warrant changes.

Senator Nurgitz: I thank the Honourable Leader of the Government, and I appreciate his remarks. I, too, am against unilateral action. It is interesting that he chose that word.

TRANSPORT

URBAN TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM—ALLEGED
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST ONTARIO

Hon. Nathan Nurgitz: Honourable senators, I would like to ask the Leader of the Government a question arising from an