

Government Orders

Would someone on the government side kindly tell the Chair if he or she wants to call other bills on the agenda or perhaps suggest suspending the sitting until the time for Private Members' Business?

[English]

Mr. Hawkes: Mr. Speaker, I think it would be in the best interests of the House to suspend the House until private members' hour at seven o'clock because those members who plan to participate have that time on their timetable. It would not be fair to them to move along too quickly. They would not necessarily be present. Seven o'clock, if the House is willing, would be the suggestion.

An hon. member: No.

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NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WATER ACT

MEASURE TO ENACT

Hon. Shirley Martin (for the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) moved that Bill C-51, an act respecting water resources in the Northwest Territories, be read the second time and referred to Legislative Committee B.

Mr. Jim Fulton (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, it is kind of unusual to have this kind of an opportunity for debate. The government members obviously do not want to defend their own legislation. That is becoming a bit of a habit on that side of the House, but as you would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, this particular legislation is an act respecting the water resources of the Northwest Territories and comes with a companion piece of legislation called Bill C-52 which is an act respecting the water resources in the Yukon territory. It has been important for some time to get this kind of legislation up for debate. I am quite confident that this will have to go to the legislative committee. We will need to have the Minister of Natural Resources from the Northwest Territories down and I am sure we will want to hear from other witnesses because the Northwest Territories contains some of the largest fresh water bodies on earth and some of the larger water systems from south of 60 flow from the provinces up into the Northwest Territories.

• (1830)

I always like to tell a few stories as I start getting into a piece of legislation. As members know, some of the major river systems that flow out of British Columbia and Alberta flow into the Northwest Territories through Canada's largest national park.

[Translation]

Mr. Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There does not seem to be a quorum in the House.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. DeBlois): I am not sure whether to count the member for Richelieu as being present or not— There is a quorum. I give the floor to the hon. member for Skeena.

[English]

Mr. Fulton: Mr. Speaker, it is always good to get the government members out of the trough at any opportunity. I would have thought they would rather debate Bill C-51 than feed themselves, but they now get a chance to listen to my story.

As I was saying, I always like to draw the attention of members to the importance of a piece of legislation by telling a few stories. As members know, Wood Buffalo National Park is the largest national park in Canada, and the United Nations has taken a very dim view of what is happening in our largest national park. It has the largest free roaming herd of bison left on earth; it has the largest whooping crane nesting areas.

One of the problems with it results from a dam actually built in British Columbia which has a direct impact on the Northwest Territories and its ability to deal effectively with water issues. That is why I know that the government of the Northwest Territories will be critically interested in this legislation, particularly if it needs to be amended in any way.

Let me get to the story here. The water used to flow in the Finlay and the Parsnip systems, in the Rocky cordillera of northern British Columbia, an area you may not have had much time to hang around in, Mr. Speaker, but I have. As these two mighty river systems were dammed by the W.A.C. Bennett dam, it slowed down the flow of water coming out of British Columbia into a mighty river that you probably have heard of called the Peace. The