

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Brian L. Gardiner (Prince George—Bulkley Valley):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to put a few words on the record about the bill that we are debating now, Bill C-51, the act respecting water resources in the Northwest Territories.

I would like to make two general comments. The first is to share the concerns of the member for Broadview—Greenwood about water exports.

In British Columbia there are a number of water export plans and in particular a plan known for sometime now as NAWPA, the North American Water and Power Alliance. It is almost science fiction, the whole question about the flooding of the Rocky Mountain trench. It would flood part of my riding.

I want to rise and share the concerns of the member because it is one of those things mulling around in somebody's mind down in the United States and if we are not cautious I fear that our government may be ambushed, if you like, or certainly will allow itself to go down the wrong route and we could be very seriously hurt on this issue. It is certainly important to flag this issue for the government and for the Canadian public.

There is also a project very much in the news just north of Kamloops that my colleague, the member for Kamloops, has been raising in this House on a regular basis. Water seems to have an essence to it that people get very concerned about. We are concerned about our forests and our fish, but water is a very emotional issue and we want to ensure that our government is aware of that.

My second point relates to the Northwest Territories. We are now debating a bill that in essence is a positive approach in terms of the development of local authority and giving, in this case, the emerging government of the Northwest Territories more responsibility for administering local affairs, in this case water. We support that.

I would like to add a bit of a British Columbia perspective and a suggestion to the government. Water does not reflect the artificial boundaries that we draw on maps. I am thinking here specifically of the Peace River, which flows from British Columbia, north of my riding, through Alberta and up into the Northwest Territories.

There are reports that we are now starting to see the very negative impacts of what is called the WAC Bennett Dam, let alone the environmental effects of the creation of Williston Lake and the large body of water that has been created there.

Some are suggesting, particularly in the Dawson Creek, Fort St. John and Mackenzie areas, that there will be quite a change in the weather by the creation of this large body of water and the downstream effects in the Peace River now being affected by the WAC Bennett Dam and its impact there and its eventual impact in the Northwest Territories.

My plea and advice to the government and to the committee when it considers this bill is obviously to hear witnesses. This is a good example of a piece of legislation where bringing witnesses to the committee would provide all members with an excellent opportunity to hear the technical arguments of how important this legislation is.

I would urge that not only officials from the Northwest Territories but also people from Alberta are seeing the impact of this as well as those from British Columbia. As you know, the former government in B.C. had this mindset about Site C, another dam on the Peace and I do not think any consideration was given to what the downstream effects would be.

I would urge the committee when it is reviewing this bill to also call witnesses from the Government of British Columbia, who have done some studies and have reason to be concerned about what authorities may do in our province and the impact it is going to have in Alberta and when this bill comes into place in the Northwest Territories.

I would hope that the government would hear these comments when the bill is before committee and that it would consider bringing these witnesses in. This would be an excellent opportunity to hear these concerns because, of course, as I said at the beginning of my comments the very concern that all of us have about our water is that it flows cleanly and wherever possible without restriction. When we do have some of these