

*Water Resources*

phases of the vast field of conservation. In almost every case it was the expressed wish that more might be done to ensure the conservation of Canada's resources for the continuing benefit of the present and future citizens of our country. It has been pointed out many times that the interests of conservation are quite often opposed to the immediate interests of financial gain, and that too often our resources have been sacrificed for profit.

We all know of many examples where human neglect or lack of knowledge or faulty practices have in the past resulted in forested land being laid waste and farm land turned to desert. We have seen torrents of water pouring down the river valleys from areas denuded of vegetation, to wreak destruction in the cities and towns below. We have seen, too, the dried-up stream beds in heat of summer and urban populations spending large sums in search for adequate water supplies.

Public consciousness of the need for conservation, and of the inherent dangers that lie in faulty practices in the conservation field, has grown with the years. I am sure it is safe to say that the people of Canada are now more conservation-minded than at any time in our history. The realization of the problem on the part of every citizen is, I believe, the most important factor in achieving the ultimate goal where our renewable resources will be managed in such a manner that they will be, as nearly as possible, available in perpetuity. We have come a long way already from the early days when our resources were looked upon as inexhaustible. This progress has been made through the efforts of public-spirited and farsighted men in all walks of life, in private industry and at every level of government.

The bill which is before us today for consideration is intended as a further step toward conserving our resources, and toward alleviating the damages that have already been suffered. The bill seeks authority for the government of Canada to grant financial assistance to provincial governments for the construction of major water conservation projects. Assistance of the nature contemplated has already been given by Canada through special votes of parliament to various projects which were outside the scope of existing conservation acts. These projects, which included the Luther marsh and Shand dams in the Grand river watershed in Ontario, and the Fanshawe dam on the Thames river north of London, were considered to be of sufficient importance that federal participation was warranted.

[Mr. Winters.]

Subject to funds being voted by parliament, we have also informed the government of Ontario that the federal government would assist financially in the construction of a conservation dam on the Conestogo river. My contacts with the government of Ontario on these water conservation measures have been with the minister of planning and development. In each of these special cases a formula has been used whereby the local municipalities affected agreed to pay 25 per cent of the cost, and the provincial and federal governments undertook to pay 37½ per cent each; in other words, to share the remaining 75 per cent on a dollar for dollar basis.

The bill now before the house is intended to place this type of assistance on a statutory basis, and thus make it available to all provincial governments. The bill provides for federal contributions up to 37½ per cent of the cost of major water conservation projects, with the remaining portion of the cost being borne by the provincial government concerned or jointly by the provincial government and the local municipalities affected. The bill also provides, however, that the contribution of the federal government shall not be greater than that of the provincial government.

This approach to the problem is designed to leave the prime responsibility with the provinces, to whom it has been assigned by the British North America Act, and yet provide sufficient assistance to encourage the undertaking of necessary projects which might not otherwise be carried out. The limitation to projects which are, in the opinion of the governor in council, of a major character will ensure that the taxpayers of all of Canada will participate only in those projects which are of sufficient importance to be of national concern, and which the province could not reasonably be expected to carry out alone.

Hon. members will notice that the bill envisages an agreement in respect to each project, and it is proposed that this agreement shall be between the government of Canada and the government of the province. The bill recognizes, however, that local authorities may be set up within the provinces to deal with particular conservation areas or problems. In fact a number of local authorities have already been established under provincial jurisdiction. These local authorities may actually undertake the work on behalf of their provincial governments, and in many cases share in the cost. In these instances there will in all probability be subsidiary agreements between the provincial governments and the municipalities or local authorities covering the terms of their participation.