

Government Orders

The reason for this is in many cases in relation to hydroelectric developments of which there are many under consideration. As we know there has been a growing need over the last number of years for a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of hydroelectric projects on the Hudson Bay and generally not just on the aquatics but the entire biosystems north of 60, and to a certain extent south of 60.

Perhaps I could take a moment on this point. It is really very germane to this piece of legislation. If we look at a major project such as James Bay I, or if we even included James Bay II, *la Grande Baleine* as it is known or the Great Whale project, and then look at some of the other major hydroelectric projects that are proposed for the entire Hudson Bay—James Bay basin, we realize very quickly the cumulative impact of all these water diversions, water impoundments and reservoir systems can be major on an entire biosystem. There have not been these kinds of cumulative studies done. I certainly believe that by transferring and delegating this kind of administrative authority we avoid duplication. We also provide localized control where we can have better democratic input in terms of decisions that are going to be made on either water withdrawals or potential water contaminations. As I said in terms of potential diversions or obstructions of water systems, we should end up with a better system. But I really do urge upon the Government of the N.W.T., the provinces and Crown Canada to enter into a serious cumulative impact evaluation of alterations or modifications to existing water systems as quickly as possible, not only of the N.W.T. but of all of this country. We can learn more from work such as that of Dr. Rudd who has been doing particular work on potential methane releases from the James Bay II, from *la Grande Baleine*.

As he has pointed out, his preliminary investigations indicate that the amount of methane releases over several decades from the Great Whale project would be comparable to that power being produced by thermal coal generation. That is the amount of methane that would be released if we converted it into carbon dioxide equivalents that would be released.

These extremely important matters related to water are often overlooked by people in bureaucracies who are issuing permits for people to withdraw water or to be involved in hydraulic mining such as placer mining and

are concerned about fish, bird breeding areas and all other such things. They tend to lose track of the larger scope, the cumulative impact of some of these major diversion and water modification projects.

It is critical that the kinds of agreements the N.W.T. may consider entering into with this newly delegated authority take account of these kinds of major issues. I pointed out the toxification and the contamination of waters flowing from British Columbia and from Alberta up through Wood Buffalo are of great concern in the Northwest Territories.

It has every right to be concerned because contamination particularly of the fisheries can have tragic consequences as we learn only too sadly of Grassy Narrows and at other locations. In the particular case of Grassy Narrows it was methyl mercury contamination. The concerns in the Northwest Territories in terms of the major pulp projects in Alberta are about the increased loadings of organo-chlorines and dioxins into the water systems.

• (1850)

What happens is that the flesh of the fish gets very high concentrations of these materials and it works its way up. It called bioaccumulation and biomagnification, something that those who study water and fisheries come to understand quite quickly, that the longer fish live, the more they eat a particular diet. It is not as though they are just eating a marshmallow with poison in it and then excreting it and the poison is gone. What happens in their body systems and in the ecosystem itself is that as more toxic contaminants are put in, their body loadings continue to go up to the point where there are some fish in some systems in Canada where we would not be safe eating one fish a year. Regrettably that is the concern right now in the Northwest Territories.

Once this legislation is properly amended before the legislative committee, brought back for debate and given Royal Assent, I am quite confident that it will have been the kind of serious debate that could, should and must take place in the N.W.T. assembly as it looks at how it should, from a regulatory perspective and from a long-term development perspective, handle permits for withdrawing water and allowing waste to go in, and how it will deal with the transboundary issues of the movement