



communiqué

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SKAGIT RIVER VALLEY TREATY

IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The Honourable Allan J. MacEachen, Deputy Prime Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, announced that a Bill to implement the Treaty between Canada and the United States relating to the Skagit River and Ross Lake, and the Seven Mile Reservoir on the Pend d'Oreille River was introduced in the House of Commons on May 31.

The Bill is intended to enable the Government to bring into force the Skagit River Valley Treaty, which was signed by Mr. MacEachen and United States Secretary of State, George Shultz, on April 2, 1984. The Treaty is part of a Settlement package which also includes a British Columbia-Seattle Agreement (the basic settlement document) and a Canada-British Columbia Agreement (which defines the roles and responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments under the terms of the Settlement).

The Bill provides legislative authority for the export of electric power to the United States by British Columbia for a period of eighty years - the National Energy Board Act now limits the authority of the Governor-in-Council to approve such exports for a maximum of twenty-five years - and for a federal guarantee to discharge the financial obligations of British Columbia in the event of the Province's failure to do so.

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The introduction of this Bill reflects the Government's commitment to the successful resolution of a long-standing Canada-United States issue which would have involved the flooding of the Skagit River Valley in British Columbia in order to produce additional electric power supply for the City of Seattle, a proposal which was given international sanction in 1942.

The overall Settlement was negotiated under the aegis of a Joint Consultative Group on the Skagit chaired by Commissioners Olson (Canada) and Bulen (USA) of the International Joint Commission, which included representatives of the Governments of Canada, the United States, and British Columbia, as well as the City of Seattle. It represents a major accomplishment in Canada's relationship with the United States and in federal-provincial co-operation. On March 30, 1984, the British Columbia-Seattle Agreement was signed in Vancouver, paving the way for the April 2 signing of the Canada-United States Treaty. The Canada-British Columbia Agreement is expected to be signed soon.

The Government of the United States has undertaken to pass similar legislation to implement the Skagit River Valley Treaty. It is expected that this will be passed during the current session of the United States Senate. When the legislative processes in both countries have been completed the Skagit Settlement will come into force and the threat to the Skagit River Valley will be averted.