

Member's Statement

February 1, 2012

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):

Mr. Speaker, in 1996, the federal government, the western provinces, Yukon and the Northwest Territories signed the Mackenzie River Basin Master Agreement. Out of this master agreement a number of bilateral agreements were to be completed, governing the quantity and quality of water moving along the Mackenzie River Basin. Fifteen years later, there are still no agreements.

In Alberta and the Northwest Territories, the lack of a bilateral agreement has meant that the rapid expansion of the oil sands is taking place without proper controls protecting these waters. This lack of control is of great concern to all northerners, particularly aboriginal people, many of whom live along the Mackenzie River.

Alberta and the federal government want to approve more capacity building by quickly approving the gateway pipeline. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Natural Resources want to simplify the environmental process to allow new developments clear sailing through these waters. However, they should assure the people of the north that basic agreements will be in place before the expansion of the oil sands.