

CITY OF NEW BRITAIN



**The Honorable
Erin E. Stewart
Mayor**

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Testimony: Re: Senate Bill No. 300: An Acting Concerning New Britain Water Company Land
Public Health Committee Public Hearing
March 7, 2016

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana and other members of the Public Health Committee.

I thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of Senate Bill 300—a piece of legislation that has the ability to make extraordinary quality of life changes – for the better - in our community for generations to come.

During a Town Hall meeting on February 17th to discuss the creation of a new water source, many community leaders and I heard from residents about the dire need to relocate the blasting at Tilcon quarry. The further away from homes the better. Right now Tilcon can come with-in 200 feet of someone's home.

This practice will continue for another 30 years unless this legislation is allowed to move forward. With this project, blasting would be moved farther away from homes—up to 3,000 feet away.

By allowing the City of New Britain to lease 131.4 acres of water company property to Tilcon, we will fulfill this wish of our residents AND secure a new clean water reservoir that will benefit New Britain and long term the entire region.

Our city's founding fathers, the Stanleys – yes from the famous Stanley Works, had tremendous foresight to develop the water supply system that we have today.

But as we have seen recently with issues surrounding clean drinking water supplies, and the on again off again water alerts – more commonly known as draughts - there is an urgent need for the region to have another water resource.

There hasn't been a new reservoir created in Connecticut in 40 years! This proposed reservoir will provide fresh drinking water on daily basis to thousands of residents and potentially for hundreds of thousands of in the region during an emergency. And think of the cooperation this water source could provide in helping to keep the local rivers and streams flowing. Wildlife would be able to spawn, where now dry brooks like the Coppermine in Bristol are a major concern.

The New Britain Water Company has been in existence for more than 150 years and we hold our drinking water standards and our responsibility to the surrounding community very high.

With the addition of this new reservoir, the New Britain Water Company's current water capacity will increase from 2.9 billion gallons to 7.6 billion gallons—an increase of 162 percent. That is half the size of the Nepaug Reservoir which is in Canton and supplies the MDC – Metropolitan District Commission.

The construction of this reservoir would increase our margin of safety, ensuring that we have an adequate supply of water and could help surrounding communities like Bristol, Berlin, Plainville, Southington and anyone downstream. If you have ever been without fresh water – think the October snow storm of 2012 – no power for days and NO water. How would you survive? This new reservoir would ensure that would never happen.

Additionally, the amount of Class 1 watershed land – precious land - will increase from less than 10 acres to nearly 240 acres when the new reservoir is completed. This protected Class 1 watershed is very important to the environment and I understand disturbing it is not ideal. But when we have the opportunity to go from less than 10 acres to more than 240 acres – I believe the risk is worth the reward.

The amount of protected open space will also grow. Tilcon will be giving a total of 275 acres to the towns of New Britain, Plainville, and Southington. This is land Tilcon currently owns but will be giving up the rights to if this reservoir is created.

As a city of only 13.2 square miles, New Britain closely guards its valuable assets. This project is consistent with the principles of being good stewards of our resources and responsibly preparing for our needs in the future and it is identified as a potential new source of drinking water in the City's approved Water Supply Plan.

The environmental, economic, financial, and residential value of this proposal for the greater New Britain region is tremendous and I urge you to support this legislation.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak in support of this proposal. My Director of Water, Gil Bligh, is in attendance, should you have any specific questions.