

of the International River Improvements Act licence governing of the project.

The project components, as specified in the panel's terms of reference, were the Rafferty Dam and reservoir on the Souris River; the Rafferty-Boundary diversion channel; intermittent channelization for approximately 16 kilometres downstream of the Rafferty Dam; and the Alameda Dam and reservoir in Moose Mountain Creek, which is situated just north of Oxbow.

The Alameda Dam would be constructed on the main stem of Moose Mountain Creek, just east of the village of Alameda. The proposed dam and ancillary works would create a reservoir of sufficient capacity to regulate flows for flood control in both Canada and the United States—that, of course, has been one of the important objectives of the project—and for improved water supply to existing users from Oxbow to the international boundary and to potential new irrigators along the reservoir and downstream of the dam.

The panel was also asked to review all information prepared in accordance with the Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Act, the United States National Environmental Policy Act and EARP itself.

No deadline was given for the completion of the review, although it was well understood that it is typical for reviews of this nature to require from 12 to 18 months for completion.

It is fair to say that there had been considerable study of the project and its effects prior to the appointment of this panel. These included environmental impact assessment statements prepared in accordance with Saskatchewan Environmental Assessment Act and the United States National Environmental Policy Act, with an initial environmental evaluation prepared in accordance with EARP guidelines order itself.

The first task of the panel was to formulate and issue operating procedures for the review. These procedures outlining how the panel planned to conduct the review were released on March 30, 1990, along with some questions and answers on the review itself.

During the first few months of its appointment, the panel was also examining and reviewing available studies on the project to determine if the information was adequate and whether or not additional information was

Supply

required before proceeding to public hearings. The panel, after a detailed examination of over 25 volumes of information, decided it did in fact require additional information. Consequently, on May 25, the panel issued its draft information request and invited written public comments on its 36 questions.

In the draft request, the panel asked for additional information on water quantity and quality, fish, wildlife, plants, petroleum resources, and recreation.

• (1140)

During March and April of this year, the panel secretariat made two visits to the Souris basin, the purpose of which was to contact provincial and municipal officials, local residents, farmers, the media, and representatives of environmental groups to explain the process, answer questions, and listen to concerns and suggestions.

During the week of June 18, the panel toured the Souris basin and held two open houses in Estevan, Saskatchewan and in my own constituency of Brandon—Souris in in Souris, Manitoba. On its driving tour, the panel had the opportunity to deal firsthand with the Souris basin in Manitoba, wildlife refuges in North Dakota, and the project site in Saskatchewan. The open houses allowed the panel to explain the review process to local residents and to listen to their concerns.

The panel received 24 submissions commenting on the draft information request. Each submission was carefully considered by the panel in the preparation of the revised document. The final information request listed 45 questions that required answers before the panel could proceed to the public hearing stage of the process.

Perhaps it is worth taking a moment to discuss in some brief detail the nature of this further information request. It dealt with issues associated with water quantity, water quality, fish, wildlife, and other areas. For example in the area of water quantity, the panel felt it was important to understand the cyclic nature in the annual water balance of lakes in a prairie environment. However, data presented in the Souris Basin Development Authority, the SBDA, environmental impact statement was from 1912 to 1981. Given that 1982 to mid-1990 was a very dry period in my part of western Canada and in the area in which the Souris River flows, the inclusion of this data in the analysis would balance the number of