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ensure that this project is completed before an environmental assessment is carried out.

We have complete complicity, as I read the history of this, with ensuring that the damage that will be done by this project is neither fully nor thoroughly and publicly examined nor mitigated on the basis of a full environmental assessment. The whole purpose seems to have been to conspire to delay the process, to conspire not to take legal action that the government could have taken, and to conspire to issue permits to make sure that any environmental assessment that is ultimately carried out—and let me remind the House that there has not been a full environmental assessment under the meaning of the act—has no force and effect because the project is complete.

The history I have spoken of starts with the issuance of the first permit for this project by the federal government with the approval of the then minister of the Environment, the Hon. Tom McMillan, in June 1988. Knowing what it knew about the environmental effects of this project, knowing what it knew about the public objections, and knowing what the guideline order said its responsibility as a government was, in particular the minister's responsibility, this government went ahead and issued a permit. Let us not forget that fundamental fact. Since then we have had a process of delay and bungling that has allowed this project to proceed nearly to completion in defiance of two very specific court orders that that not happen.

For over 11 days now we have had a minister who knows that work is proceeding that should not be proceeding. He has failed to do anything to stop that work. The minister's predecessor knew since April that work was proceeding that should not proceed, in contravention of the court order and in contravention of the agreement. We have a government that has continued to pay the province of Saskatchewan \$1 million a month of taxpayers' money to continue doing work under an agreement which it had agreed not to do.

• (1210)

We have a crisis now, a crisis of which a minister was aware in April and allowed to develop to this point. The minister admitted in the House last Friday that he was out in Saskatchewan in July, negotiating ways around the

agreement and negotiating ways around the terms of reference of the environmental assessment panel. He was trying to pretend that work which was going on there was perfectly in accord with an agreement when he knew perfectly well the concerns of his environmental review panel that its work was futile, was useless, and was a sham if the work were allowed to continue.

The parliamentary secretary is sitting over there, shaking his head. Let me read from the letter of the Environmental Assessment Panel to the minister, dated October 4: "As you know, on April 2, this panel wrote to your predecessor expressing concerns regarding continued construction of the Rafferty-Alameda project. On April 27, Saskatchewan announced its intention to proceed with ancillary works in the Rafferty River reservoir and below the Rafferty dam.

These activities have gone far beyond any minimum measures necessary to ensure the safety of the site. The parliamentary secretary knows that, the minister knows that, and I suspect the Prime Minister knows that.

Why did they not act in April? Why did they not use the powers that are there under the guideline orders, that the courts have reaffirmed and that are in fact strengthened by the decisions they have made not only on Rafferty-Alameda but also on the Oldman River dam project?

The panel made clear many times over those months what its concerns were. The minister failed to act. I reject totally the minister's claims that he is now concerned and that he will take tough action. The time for tough action has passed and construction of the Rafferty dam is weeks away from completion, because there has been no action since last spring.

The panel is put in the position of saying that it understands that the agreement has been interpreted differently, the agreement between Saskatchewan and Ottawa which says that safety work can continue and that the Government of Canada will pay the province of Saskatchewan \$1 million a month for the inconvenience of the delay. That has gone on since April now. For eight months the people of Canada have been paying the province of Saskatchewan \$1 million a month not to work on the Rafferty-Alameda dam project, when the government has known perfectly well that it is proceeding in violation of that agreement and has continued to pay. I