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## Okanagan Basin Water Board Director Pleased With Water Sustainability Act

3/12/2014

On Tuesday, the provincial government introduced the Water Sustainability Act into the B.C. Legislature for first reading. The goal is to replace British Columbia's century-old Water Act and the former Chair of the Okanagan Basin Water Board says that's a big step in the right direction.

Stu Wells, who is now a director on the water board, hopes the proposed act is the start of a provincial effort to conserve more water in areas such the Okanagan, where water is scarce during the dry summer months.

"We just need a lot of monitoring and metering. With our groundwater, we don't know how much water is being pumped out of our water tables. So it's really important that this process keeps moving forward," says Wells. "To me, this is stage one."

The proposed act is expected to improve areas such as water-use efficiency and conservation, regulating and protecting groundwater, regulating water use during times of scarcity, measuring and reporting large-scale water use and more.

The province says the new act was prepared after an extensive public engagement process that spanned four years. Wells says the Okanagan Basin Water Board was heavily involved in that engagement process.

"We were absolutely involved and particularly through the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, which is the hands on technical board made up of approximately 28 volunteers. They work very hard and they supply information to the water board and to other agencies and boards. So there certainly was input from the stewardship council," says Wells.

The province hopes the changes will be brought into effect in the spring of 2015, once supporting regulations are developed and finalized.

Adam Graham - Penticton