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## **WATCH: Okanagan Residents Urged to Reduce Water Consumption**

By Global News



It's something we all need and all use but not all of us make efforts to protect it.

As it plans for the future, the Okanagan Basin water board says it's more important than ever to protect our water supply.

The Water Board's Executive Director, Anna Warwick-Sears, points to weather extremes as a key reason to start reducing our water use now.

"What all the models predict is we will have warmer winters. We may have same amount of precipitation but we will have more rain than snow," says Warwick-Sears.

She says weather changes are evident everywhere and uses Mission Creek as another example.

In the last two years, Mission Creek was so high it spilled over the creek's banks three times.

It was a flood situation the Province said was supposed to be a one in 200 year event and not a three times in two years.

"The Provincial Government, it had to revise what it considered one in 200 year probability because it is like a one in 5 million probability to have three like that," says Warwick-Sears.

The impact of weather extremes on water sustainability was one of the topics discussed at the water board's annual meeting today.

Another big issue at the forefront that also affects water use planning is population growth.

"The global population is expected to go to nine billion over next 25 years or so," says Warwick-Sears.

With numbers expected to increase significantly in the Okanagan in the next 20 years, the water board is urging everyone to start reducing their water consumption now.

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"We know that about 25 percent of water used in the Okanagan goes on people's lawns for the most part and there is a lot of room there to conserve water," says the board's chair Doug Findlater.

While local watersheds like the Okanagan Basin Water Board partner up with stakeholders to plan for the future, the Provincial Government is doing what it can.

This spring it will implement the new Water Sustainability Act which will help protect the precious resource with groundwater regulation being a key part.

"We are pretty much the last jurisdiction that does not license or manage our ground water," says University of Victoria Environmental Professor Deborah Curran.

The lack of groundwater regulation has allowed large-scale commercial and industrial users to withdraw the resource without licensing, reporting, or paying for it.

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"What you can do is be denied a water license on Okanagan river and you can go 20 meters onto your own property and sink a well and use as much water as you like and those

are hydrologically connected so it would impact the river. What the new act does over time, it will license all groundwater uses," says Curran.

The Okanagan Basin Water Board recently conducted a three year study on lake evaporation.

It says we lose about a meter of lake water every year due to evaporation.