

# Start managing our water better right now

By [Judie Steeves - Kelowna Capital News](#)

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We're squandering both water and energy at spectacular rates and changes in water policy must be made by governing bodies immediately, according to Bob Sandford, lead policy author of the Adaptation and Climate Change Team.

Sandford was speaking Thursday to members of the Okanagan Water Stewardship Council, a technical advisory committee to the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

That body, he said, is being noticed across the country for its strategic position in water management, and for its collaborative model.

Even senior government staff in B.C. are expecting this board to have influence in the current Water Act Modernization process the province has underway, he told the council.

"Your perspectives are being noticed," he advised, adding the board should advance water reform policy through the WAM process.

In the next two years, he said the OBWB and its stewardship council is positioned to influence water policy in this province.

Water users in Canada are "egregious water wasters," he says, and climate change impacts on water are real and substantial.

The Okanagan Valley's limited water provides a good example of the importance of careful management of water.

But, he pointed to the prairies, where flooding cost millions of dollars in damage this year, plus a billion dollars in lost agricultural production this year alone.

Re-current flooding events will become the pattern in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, he said, due to climate change.

And, in the Arctic, the landscape is melting under their feet, he added.

One way to manage the affects of climate change is to manage water carefully.

However, he said infrastructure causes waste, for instance, in our reliance on lawns.

That waste is not only costly in water, but also in such energy costs as treatment of that wasted water and transportation of it.

That could all be halted by policy changes to save water at the government level.

Streamlining is needed to reduce the institutional fragmentation when it comes to managing water, he noted.

Council chair Bernie Bauer said it was really good to head an external perspective on what the council is doing, and to have the council's efforts reinforced.

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