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## Gas Tax cash will help study Okanagan water supply and needs

The Okanagan Basin Water Board has been given \$397,000 by the federal government to study water flows in creeks entering Okanagan Lake and determine future water needs.

The money, from the Gas Tax Fund, will help local, municipal, provincial and federal officials better understand the water needs in the Okanagan, a region known for its water challenges and as home to Canada's largest population growth.

The announcement was made last Friday.

With the funding, the two-year second phase of the study will begin looking at the water flow needs of fish and aquatic ecosystems. The first phase identified and mapped the major creeks feeding into Okanagan Lake.

The second phase will include approximate-

ly 10 stream-by-stream studies, using flow monitoring equipment in streams identified as important for fish habitat throughout the valley.

The work will be a partnership between the OBWB and Okanagan Nation Alliance's fisheries department and the B.C. Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations.

*"Water is precious in the Okanagan, where we have one of the lowest rates of water available per person than anywhere in Canada, but have one of the highest rates of use in the country,"*

Doug Findlater,  
Okanagan Water  
Basin Board chair

of the highest rates of use in the country," said Doug Findlater, chairman of the OBWB.

"Through this grant, the water board, ONA and FLNRO, will be conducting the largest environmental flow needs study in Canada. This is an essential process needed to sustain-



AUSTAIR WATERS/BLACK PRESS

**OKANAGAN** Basin Water Board executive director Anna Warwick Sears with a map of the major creeks that flow into Okanagan Lake, identified in the first phase of a study looking at water needs in the region. Last Friday, the federal government announced funding for the second phase of the study, to look at water flow levels.

ably manage the waters of this valley."

Steve Thomson, B.C.'s Minister of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations and the MLA for Kelowna-Lake Country, said with last year's drought in mind, the findings of the study will help his ministry deal with similar environmental situations here in the future.

The federal funding will help the water board, which serves the three Okanagan regional districts, including Lake

*"Instead of waiting to see the fish gasping in the streams, this will allow us to know how much water they need."*

Anna Warwick Sears,  
OBWB executive director

Country, to plan ahead and prioritize the water needs of fish and aquatic ecosystems, helping ensure the sustainability of the Okanagan, said Kelowna-Lake Country MP Stephen Fuhr, speaking on behalf of

Amarjeet Sohi, the federal Liberal government's infrastructure and communities minister.

OBWB's executive director, Anna Warwick Sears, said the need for the project was identified in 2010 when the agency

completed phase two of its water supply and demand study.

"Since then, concerns have continued to grow about the number of water licences on Okanagan streams, so we started working with the province on how to make the best licensing decisions," she said.

"But then we both realized there's a critical information gap—we need to know the needs of fish before allocat-

SEE WATER A3

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## news

# Changes are coming to the classroom

Kevin Parnell

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For the first time in more than two decades, teachers, principals and vice-principals, along with senior staff from the Central Okanagan School District, gathered under one roof for a collaborative learning session last week as educators began to delve into a redesigned curriculum being implemented in B.C. schools.

More than 1,500 strong took in the day-long working session designed to help educators understand the changes being implemented from kindergarten to Grade 12, some of which is already in place in schools and some of which is still being worked on.

Local teachers facilitated the 60 different sessions offered at the event, held at KSS, with the motto "Together We Learn" as educators explored the redesigned curriculum.

"What was really exciting, as someone new to the district, was having

everyone together with a common purpose," said Central Okanagan school superintendent Kevin Kaardal, who replaced his predecessor Hugh Gloster in December.

"I'm so thrilled with the leadership of all of our partners, particularly with the collaborative approach that the Central Okanagan Teachers Association and our joint educational change committee took.

"I was very impressed with the 60 teachers that stepped forward to share their expertise with their colleagues as facilitators.

"That takes a certain amount of courage." Called Building Student Success: B.C.'s New Curriculum, the redesign of the curriculum in B.C. schools is being implemented across the province beginning this year and over the next two years.

Changes in K to Grade 9 are optional this year but will be the official curriculum next year, while changes in Grades 10 to 12 will be optional next year and official in 2017-18.

Mandated by the



At last week's non-instructional day for teachers in the Central Okanagan, much work was done to study the redesigned B.C. curriculum by 1,500 educators, from teachers to principals to senior staff, school board members and students.

provincial government, the new curriculum will place more emphasis on the deeper understanding of concepts and the application of processes rather than on the memorization of isolated facts and information, according to the government's website detailing the changes (curriculum.gov.bc.ca/).

Across the province, educators have been given two learning days this school session where kids are not in school and educators can learn the redesign.

In the Central Okanagan, the first one

was last Tuesday and another day will follow in late May.

"Never before has a curriculum been changed top to bottom," said Susan Bauhart, the president of the Central Okanagan Teachers Association.

"It really was just the start and the level of expertise in the district is varied. Some teachers are using it this year, others are planning to move into it next year when it's mandated and the 10 to 12 curriculum is only in the draft phase so they don't know what it's going to look like.

"But the fundamental principles are there and that's what Tuesday was all about. It was a wonderful opportunity for us all to be together. I don't remember another single event that drew everyone together."

For the past several months the school district's joint education change committee—consisting of teachers, principals and senior staff—worked together to design the day-long session.

"It was just a phenomenal day of bringing everyone together under one roof

to learn together," said assistant superintendent Terry Beaudry.

"We went to multiple sessions and really heard from our teachers excellent questions but also excitement about the next steps as we move forward with the redesign."

At the heart of the redesigned curriculum are literacy and numeracy foundations of reading and writing as well as essential learning: What students are expected to know, be able to do and understand at each grade. It also focuses on core competencies

of creative and critical thinking, communication and personal and social responsibilities.

As teachers begin to put those into practice in local schools the first of two non-instructional days this year was certainly seen as a big success.

"It was a great day," concluded Kaardal.

"It was a career highlight for many people because it brought everyone together and we were working together for a common purpose: To improve learning for our students and that was fantastic."

## Water licence planning will help fish before they are 'gasping in the streams'

WATER FROM A1

ing more licences. In fact, B.C.'s new Water Sustainability Act will require environmental needs be taken into consideration."

She also referenced last year's drought, saying competing needs for water, such as population growth, industry, agricul-

ture and, of course, aquatic species are continuing to multiply so the project will help make the best water-use decisions possible.

The project will help the province with water licence decisions, but it will also help local governments make better informed development and infrastructure plan-

"This comes at a critical time with us all facing the backdrop of climate change and the likelihood of increased drought.

Pauline Terbasket, Okanagan Nation Alliance executive director

ning decisions.

And it will help the ONA and FLNRO with their respective fishery

recovery efforts.

"Instead of waiting to see the fish gasping in the streams, this will al-

low us to know how much water they need," said Sears. "It's like an advanced warning system, letting us know when and where restrictions and regulations are needed."

Pauline Terbasket, ONA's executive director, said her organization, which has constitutional rights to the waters af-

fect, will benefit from further collaboration.

"While this technical collaborative project offers opportunity for the OBWB and the ONA and its member communities to support these efforts, we will be working together to develop how we collect and manage data in the Okanagan," she said.

"This comes at a critical time with us all facing the backdrop of climate change and the likelihood of increased drought."

In B.C., the Union of British Columbia Municipalities administers the federal Gas Tax Fund, in partnership with Ottawa and the province.



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