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Raising flood sandbag barriers to prevent windy conditions from crashing waves off Okanagan Lake onto Peachland streets in 2017 flooding. (File photo)

Okanagan Lake monitoring strategy called outdated: Peachland councillor

Peachland council says flood damage proving costly

BARRY GERDING / Aug. 15, 2020 7:30 a.m. / NEWS



Peachland councillor Terry Condon says the Okanagan Lake flood control benchmarks currently being used aren’t relevant today.

“What we have seen in the last seven or eight years for monitoring the lake level isn’t working,” said Condon at the Peachland council meeting last Tuesday (Aug. 11).

Condon said Peachland can’t continue to watch provincial flood control measures remain unchanged and expect a different result.

“We can’t continue to pay for flood damage, for our community, and for a local and provincial basis, to bear the cost of that,” Condon said.

“It seems to me it would be a smart thing to take a good look at getting the (benchmark levels) right and make sure the lake levels are adjusted appropriately at the pace they need to be adjusted to,” Condon said.

“Given the technology of 2020, I can’t believe this isn’t possible, nor can I believe it is cheaper, in the long run, to continue on as we are rather than looking for better solutions.”

Mayor Cindy Forton acknowledged the water level strategies for managing the lake level evolved from a joint federal-provincial government study, the framework of which dates back to the 1970s.

“I think it would be smart for the province to review how lake levels are being managed. A lot has changed since the 1970s. There is no mention of climate change or other factors that influence lake levels today in that original study, that snowmelt today is faster and could be calculated better, how forestry has taken place further uphill and affects upstream flow,” Fortin said.

Coun. Keith Fielding suggested Peachland seek the support of the Regional District of Central Okanagan board and Okanagan Basin Water Board before approaching the province on this issue.

“Having the support of stakeholders will add more weight to any effort to lobby the province for changes,” Fielding said.

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