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## Realities of climate change warrant Okanagan dam replacement - water managers

RON SEYMOUR Sep 30, 2021 Updated Sep 30, 2021



The provincial government should spend \$1 million annually reviewing the Okanagan Lake drainage system with a view to eventually replacing the 60-year-old dam at Penticton, provincial finance officials were told Wednesday.

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The Okanagan dam at Penticton is 60 years old and needs to be replaced to better cope with the realities of climate change, water managers say.

A structure like the dam - which controls the outflow of water from Okanagan Lake to lakes further south in the Valley - typically lasts 70-80 years, the Okanagan Basin Water Board says.

Not only is the dam nearing the end of its operational lifespan, its current design is inadequate to rapidly and effectively respond to lake levels that can change quickly, the OBWB says.

"It is inadequate for managing future floods in its current state, given the increased volume and frequency of floods as a result of climate change, and the province needs to begin planning for its replacement," OBWM executive director Anna Warwick Sears told provincial finance officials during a 2022 budget consultation meeting on Wednesday.

The OBWB hopes the government will allocate \$1 million annually for the next five years for a comprehensive review of the Okanagan Lake drainage system. The work would identify flaws in the current operation, and suggest what kind of improvements or new infrastructure are better needed to manage the seasonal elevation changes in Okanagan Lake.

In her budget submission, Warwick Sears also asked the government to restore funding for a program that inspects vessels being towed into B.C. for invasive quagga and zebra mussels.

Government provided \$3.8 million for the inspection stations in 2017, but the amount has been reduced since then.

The mussels, if they become established in B.C., will foul swimming beaches, clog water infrastructure, and negatively affect aquatic ecosystems, the OBWB says.

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