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CANADA

# Climate change makes Okanagan dam ‘inadequate for managing future floods’

By **Kathy Michaels** · Global News  
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FILE. Okanagan dam is ready to be replaced, say water officials. **Shelby Thom / Global News**



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Climate change has sped up the need to replace the Okanagan dam, the organization that offers leadership on water management throughout the valley says.

“As a result of climate change, Okanagan Lake level fluctuates more significantly than in the past and the infrastructure and operating plan are no longer adequate,” the Okanagan Basin Water Board said in a report given to provincial finance officials Wednesday.

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“In 2017, we had the worst flooding in living memory and in 2021 the lake was nearly the lowest level in its historical range.”

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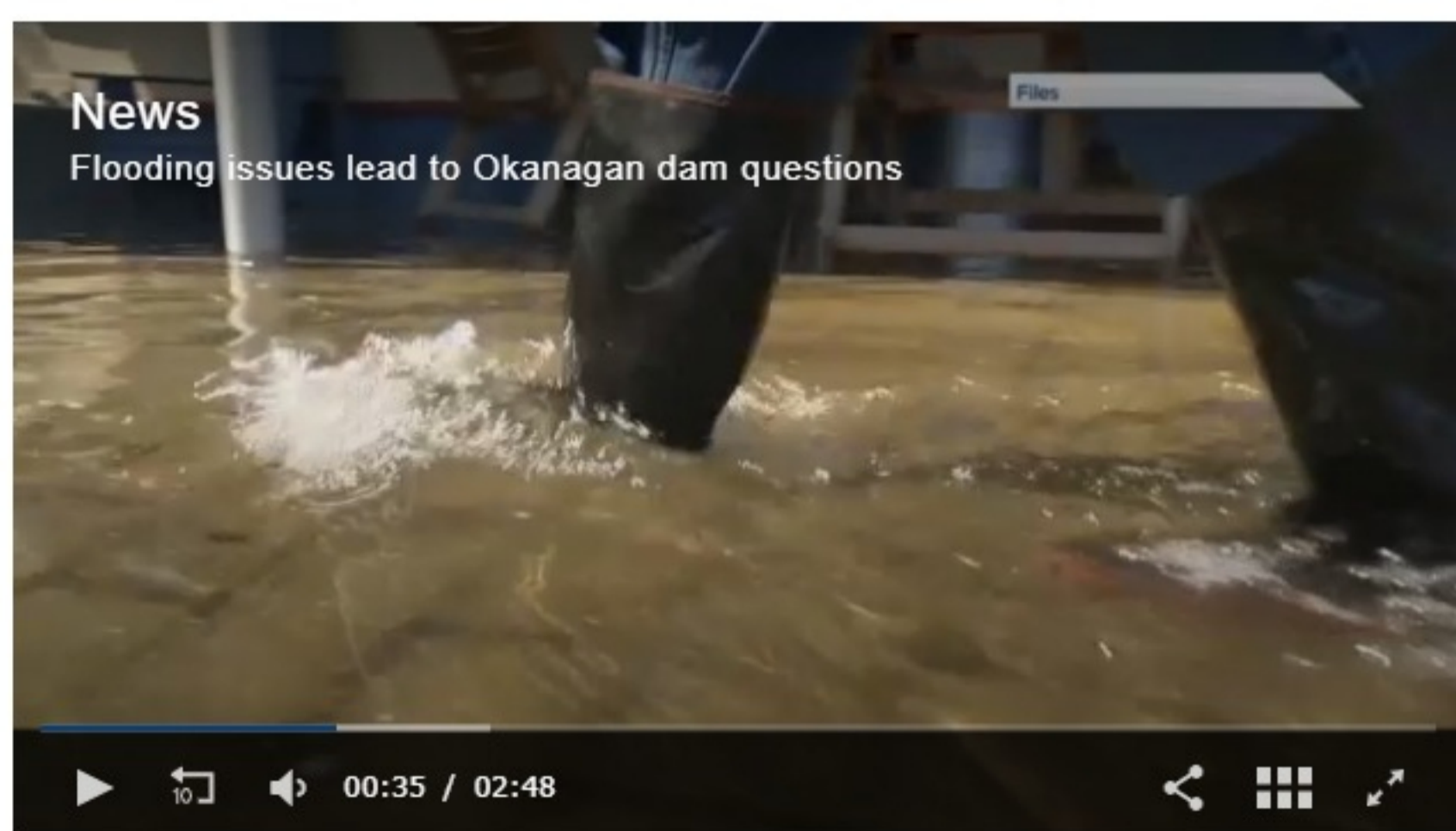
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The report goes on to say that both flooding and drought are projected to become much more prevalent in the years to come, causing damage to both infrastructure and the natural environment, also causing harm to the Okanagan Nation Alliance’s efforts to restore sockeye, chinook and kokanee salmon populations.

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Drought, the board said in the report, will challenge the agricultural economy and create “conflict between water users.”

The typical lifespan of this infrastructure is 70 to 80 years and the Okanagan dam is more than 60 years old.



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“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 of B.C. needs to begin planning for its replacement,” reads the report.

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The board said it would like to see the government 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 needed to manage the seasonal elevation changes in Okanagan Lake.

Additionally, it would like to see funding to prevent invasion by non-native zebra and quagga mussels and establish a permanent watershed security fund to support the protection of water sources.