

Opinion

Incentive to be water-wise and fire smart

With all the talk about flooding, convincing the public to not only conserve water but also plan to use water more wisely in future would appear to be a tough sell.

But that is exactly what the Okanagan Basin Water Board has embarked on with the latest edition of its Make Water Work campaign.

The Okanagan is one of the biggest water-use areas in the province and planning for the drier months we know are coming is critical. And the time for that planning is now—before we find ourselves staring down yet another drought.

In recent years, this area has gone from boom to bust in terms of water. Flooding in the spring has been quickly followed by drought conditions in the summer and the very dangerous offshoot of those conditions—the high risk of forest fire.

With a semi-arid climate like the one we have in the central and south Okanagan, it does not take long for the ground to dry up and provide the fuel needed to turn a simple spark into a full-on raging firestorm.

As recent history across the B.C. Interior shows, few if any, areas are immune.

That's why the reminder needs to be made time and time again—in the strongest possible way—to be extra vigilant when it comes to fire.

As a stark reminder, just this week an Oregon teen was fined an incredible \$36.5 million by the courts after he was found responsible for starting a massive wildfire that caused tremendous damage to land and property. The ability to bill those responsible for starting fires the full cost of the response also exists in this province but we have yet to see such a severe response from the authorities.

And that brings us back to what must be a more prudent use of water. Among its many uses, water is required for fire suppression. And it's critical we have enough when needed.

So do your part to make water work wisely. Make sure your irrigation system is working properly and at the right times, water plants and grass, not pavement, let your grass grow a little higher, use lawn clippings to help rejuvenate your grass. The list goes on and on and is easily accessible from makewaterwork.ca.

Planning now gives you choices. Putting it off the decisions takes them away.

Climate change is creating a new normal when it comes to our weather patterns. But there are things all of us can do. Being water wise and fire smart are just two of them.