

Report urges better B.C. planning on water



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Published on: September 14, 2016 | Last Updated: September 14, 2016 4:32 PM PST



Shuswap Lake [PNG files]

VICTORIA - British Columbians should still be worried about drought, water quality and better water planning, says a new report, even

though the relatively mild summer failed to cause any water shortage crises.

A University of Victoria POLIS Project on Ecological Governance [report released Wednesday \(http://poliswaterproject.us1.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=389657c8f0bdb7fc5e9dc59d&id=1b92e6d5c3&e=a16e506bfc\)](http://poliswaterproject.us1.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=389657c8f0bdb7fc5e9dc59d&id=1b92e6d5c3&e=a16e506bfc) said the province should act now to build resistance to drought and floods, protect water for drinking and recreation, ensure future sustainability, more accurately map B.C.'s watersheds and better include water issues in planning natural resource and economic development projects.

“The report is trying to say British Columbia, British Columbians and in fact many Canadians for a long time haven't really thought about water issues a whole lot,” said Oliver Brandes, project co-coordinator. “Sure they crop up, the drought of 2015 we think about for a bit, we respond and sometimes it's enough. Sometimes it goes away. And then we forget.”

The report includes dozens of examples of water conflict around the province, including the planned Site C hydroelectric dam, the Mount Polley mine tailings pond breach and the soil remediation conflict at Shawnigan Lake. Water will also play an increasing role in First Nations land title claims, read the report.

“They are water challenges but they will define B.C.'s future more than just a local problem, but also in our economy and how healthy our citizens and towns are,” said Brandes.

“There are some opportunities we have to get ahead of the curve. If we just keep responding in a crisis mode these problems are only going to get more severe and common.”

B.C. recently passed new water legislation – the first update to provincial water laws in 100 years – which regulates groundwater extraction and includes new powers to protect streams and rivers from running dry.

It's too early to say how well the provincial intervention powers will work, said Brandes, because the past summer had few water shortages. But the law was a step in the right direction, he said.

“We're seeing the beginnings of a general shift to a better management regime.”