
NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Agriculture

B.C. government commits \$5 million for new Oliver irrigation system

OLIVER – The B.C. government has committed \$5 million to reroute the Town of Oliver’s agricultural irrigation system so the region’s fruit, vegetable and crop economy has the stability to grow.

The project will reroute the irrigation system around Gallagher Lake to follow Highway 97 and connect to the irrigation canal upstream of the lake, resulting in a reliable source of water for growers, year round.

The new system offers a long-term solution to the damage caused by a January 2016 rockslide that damaged pipes and equipment that deliver agricultural water to the Town of Oliver, the Osoyoos Indian Band (OIB), and irrigation users in the Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen. The need to reroute the irrigation system was established following temporary repairs made in the spring of 2016, which identified significant instability of the rock face above the piping, and led to a technical evaluation for a long-term solution.

The project is estimated to cost \$10 million with the Province’s contribution conditional on the town raising the remaining funds, consulting with stakeholders, completing the necessary due diligence for the project, and both an environmental impact and an archaeological review before the project begins.

The Oliver area is home to over 30 wineries and produces more than \$30 million worth of wine grapes, cherries, peaches, apples and forage crops each year, with the regional district producing over \$130 million worth of crops annually. Almost all crops in the area require irrigation water to grow, with irrigation usually beginning in early April.

Quotes

Linda Larson, MLA for Boundary-Similkameen –

“Oliver’s famous and first-class fruit and wine industry depend on irrigation to grow their products, and this proposal offers a long-term plan to keep the local fruit, wine and tourism economy growing. The proposed project offers more than a year-round reliable water source for growers, it offers the stability to build their businesses and continue the traditions of our agricultural community.”

Chief Clarence Louie, Osoyoos Indian Band –

“The Osoyoos Indian Band is pleased that the B.C. government has committed approximately 50% of the projected cost for a new and stable Oliver irrigation system. Water is the social and economic life blood of the South Okanagan. This project protects thousands of existing jobs

and gives our region future economic opportunities. Lem - lemt' (Thank You), Province of B.C. and our MLA, Linda Larson.”

Ron Hovanes, Mayor of Oliver –

“It goes without saying that the absolute key ingredient to the success of agriculture and its related industry is the access to a reliable water supply. Today’s announcement by the Province of B.C. ensures that our farming community will continue to be the cornerstone of the South Okanagan’s success. Together we thank our MLA Linda Larson, and the Province of B.C. for the generous contribution to this infrastructure project. We could not do this alone.”

Terry Schafer, Area C director, Regional District of the Okanagan Similkameen –

“As the Area C director I want to express my gratitude to the provincial government for stepping up and helping us with the repair of the worst damage to the most valuable agricultural asset we have in the South Okanagan. It was the provincial government that funded the canal's construction 90 years ago and the canal was the spark that ignited the subsequent economy here in Oliver, Osoyoos, OIB and the surrounding rural areas. So, again, on behalf of the water users, the farmers, the grape growers, the tree fruit industry and indeed, all of the tax payers in Area C, I want to thank the B.C. government for coming to the table in a meaningful way and I want to thank our MLA Linda Larson for her efforts in helping to secure this grant.”

Learn More

2016 News Release – B.C. and Oliver partner on irrigation repair to keep agriculture economy flowing: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2016PREM0027-000437>

Media Contact:

Government Communications and Public
Engagement
Ministry of Agriculture
250 356-1674

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