



Media Release

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF VERNON
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Change required for City of Vernon release of high quality treated reclaimed water

The City of Vernon is preparing for a change at the Vernon Water Reclamation Centre (VWRC) and its release of high quality reclaimed water following the treatment process.

Presently, the VWRC receives and treats approximately 12.3 million litres of influent every day, which is mostly domestic and commercial in nature but does also include industrial wastewater. Following an advanced reclamation process, including the use of primary, secondary and tertiary levels of treatment, most of the reclaimed water (more than 98%) is piped to MacKay Reservoir, located 10 km from the VWRC. MacKay Reservoir is on Commonage Road. The rest of the reclaimed water is piped to The Rise Golf Course, where it is used for irrigation.

Reclaimed water from MacKay Reservoir is used to irrigate local golf courses, ball diamonds, soccer pitches, agricultural land used for grazing and hay production, two seed orchards, a seedling nursery and other tree plantations.

The spray irrigation program is permitted by the Ministry of Environment and allows the City to reuse valuable water resources and provide a unique service to land owners in the North Okanagan region.

According to a qualified professional engineer (Urban Systems) and an *Environmental Impact Study* completed in 2013, the water leaving the VWRC is rated as being some of the highest quality treated reclaimed water in British Columbia.

During the last three years (2017 – 2019), there has been a significant reduction in the use of reclaimed water from MacKay Reservoir. This has been due to factors outside the City's control, including: poor weather in spring and summer; cooler temperatures; increased cloud cover; smoke from wildfires; and atypical rainfall. With all of these contributing factors, the use of reclaimed water was reduced in order to prevent oversaturation of the pasture and crop lands and recreation areas. The reduction in spray irrigation has led to MacKay Reservoir nearing its maximum storage capacity elevation (1939 feet above sea level, or fast).

Under the City's Operating Certificate issued by the Ministry of Environment, the City is permitted to redirect the flow of treated reclaimed water from the VWRC directly to Okanagan Lake, via a deep lake outfall, when there are unforeseen circumstances that do not allow the

City to draw down the water in MacKay Reservoir. The deep lake outfall is located 7 km southwest of Kin Beach, is approximately 1.5 – 2 km from either shore, and is 60 m below the water surface. Reclaimed water from the VWRC meets all requirements of our Operating Certificate issued by the Ministry of Environment, and has been treated to protect the ecosystem within Okanagan Lake and its surrounding area.

With three consecutive years of wetter and cooler summers, the MacKay Reservoir is nearing its maximum storage capacity. The City of Vernon will be required to discharge reclaimed water to Okanagan Lake, starting in February 2020. The change in operation will allow the 2020 summer spray irrigation program to draw down MacKay Reservoir to a more manageable level. The City is currently working with the Ministry of Environment to determine when the discharge will end.

While this situation requires a change in operation for the VWRC, reclaimed water discharge is not an uncommon practice in the Okanagan Valley. Currently, communities located along Okanagan Lake (including the City of Kelowna, City of West Kelowna, District of Peachland, District of Summerland and City of Penticton) discharge the majority of their treated reclaimed water to Okanagan Lake or adjacent water courses every day.

In order to provide more information about the comprehensive water reclamation process, the City invites the public to take a guided tour of the VWRC on Saturday, January 25. Two tours will be available (starting at 11:00 am and 1:00 pm) and will take approximately 90 minutes each.

The tours will provide ample opportunity for members of the public to ask questions and to see how the City is working every day to protect our environment and valuable water resources in the North Okanagan region.

We note that space is limited so if you would like to participate in a tour, please RSVP by emailing vwrc@vernon.ca or calling 250-550-3627 no later than Friday, January 24 at 3:00 pm. The tour involves indoor and outdoor spaces and includes several sets of stairs and potential obstacles. Appropriate footwear is required.