Sustainable Environment Network Society
3300 37th Avenue
Vernon BC, V1T 2Y5

City of Vernon
3001 32nd Avenue
Vernon BC, V1T 2L8

February 17, 2020.

To: Mayor and Council,

Re: Discharge into Okanagan Lake

Since making our position about discharging effluent to Okanagan Lake known, SENS has been contacted by many who feel the same, including members of the now defunct Save Our Lake (SOL) group which tells us that Council could choose a more beneficial way to solve the McKay Reservoir overfull problem than by discharging to Okanagan Lake and, at the same time, save considerable taxpayers' money.

Council has stated that because McKay was too full, it needed to discharge 12.3 million litres of sewage effluent to Okanagan Lake as an emergency measure. At the same time Greater Vernon Water (GVW) is proposing to pump 2 million cubic meters of water from Okanagan Lake to fill Goose Lake in order to provide irrigation water to agricultural lands along Old Kamloops Road and Bella Vista area. This would presumably allow GVW to stop using very expensive domestic water from Duteau Creek to fill Goose Lake, which is what is currently done. However, this new proposal to fill Goose Lake is costly. We hear that in addition to building pipes and pump house, the pumping alone would exceed $150,000/year.

Yet, *The Rise* golf course is already using treated wastewater for irrigation so an extension from that line could be used to fill Goose Lake. This solution seems so beneficial that it's surprising that it isn't being considered. Simply extending a pipe would allow filling of Goose Lake from Vernon's treated wastewater, and thus prevent discharge to Okanagan Lake and allow the City to use taxpayers' money to the greatest financial and environmental benefit, as is its mandate.

The fact that using a pipe to go to Goose Lake was not mentioned, combined with the publicity campaign the City ran about the treated sewage excess made us fear that discharging to Okanagan Lake was a new direction rather than a temporary measure. Hopefully this is not the case, and the emergency discharge of 12.3-million litres of sewage effluent to Okanagan Lake every day will indeed be temporary and will not reoccur since you have other potential solutions that are far better for everyone.

The 1987 court agreement prohibits the City from discharging to the lake, even if the effluent meets MoE's standards, unless in an emergency situation. Old newspaper articles show that the last time council did this, in December 2006, SOL blasted the City over the discharge. At the time, Mayor Lippert said that even though *"the City is committed to continuing beneficial re-use of reclaimed water…. our City should not be treated differently than other Okanagan*

municipalities". But, Vernon IS different because Save Our Lake members fought long and hard to make it so. They hired lawyers and went to court to prohibit sewage effluent from being discharged to the lake. As a result, Vernon gained the reputation of being a leader in how it disposes of its effluent.

The Okanagan has recently been highlighted by the World Wildlife Foundation as one of the five regions most in need of environmental protection across Canada. Now is the time to lead and proudly continue to protect Okanagan Lake.

SENS Directors ask Vernon City Council to confirm that:

a) All Vernonites can count on this council to stop discharging to Okanagan Lake as soon as possible, and

b) Council will continue with or even increase the beneficial use of wastewater in the most economical way possible rather than continue on with an extremely expensive proposal. Saving money on piping and the building of new infrastructure might even allow the City to eliminate the fees and get new customers, ensuring a win for everybody.

We would appreciate hearing from you before the end of February so that we may notify our members and newsletter readers. We look forward to a positive response.
Should you have any questions please contact me at 250 503-3150.

Yours sincerely

Sigrid-Ann Thors
Chair, SENS