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By Lachlan McKenzie, BrightEconomy Advisory Board member

Water is such a fundamental part of our everyday lives, in our lakes, streams and oceans, in our homes and workplaces, that many of us don't think of it as an economic asset.

But around the world, as population pressures grow and stress on the environment increases, access to clean potable water is becoming increasingly difficult.

We are seeing that in a comparatively small way in Rotorua now due to lake pollution, and thankfully we have the will and the resources to do something about it before the damage is irreversible.

Not so in other places. Demand for clean water is increasing around the globe. This fact makes the Rotorua district's abundant water increasingly valuable, as one of the six new areas of opportunity identified in the BrightEconomy nine-point framework.

The BrightEconomy Strategy of sustainable economic growth means making maximum use of such opportunities. This will include maximising the recreational use of our lakes and rivers, ensuring businesses have the water supplies they need to operate effectively and there is enough water to serve a growing population.

As well, we are investigating ways to encourage Rotorua to become a leader in developing water treatment systems and technology to clean up polluted water. This could include using plants and bio-technology to harvest dissolved nitrates and phosphates, which are pollutants in water but can be turned into feedstocks for businesses to export to domestic and international markets.

There is no doubt that water is a major economic asset for Rotorua. It is up to us now to use it wisely for sustainable growth that benefits the whole community and the environment.