

City talks about water- use restrictions

Capital preparing emergency backup station to keep up with demand

- The Guardian (Charlottetown)
- 10 Jul 2012
- BY DAVE STEWART

Residents of Charlottetown beware — the water police may be coming soon. The city is talking about introducing water - use restrictions if people don't soon stop washing their cars and watering their lawns.

Coun. Eddie Rice, chair of the city's Water and Sewer Utility committee, said the city is preparing its emergency backup station for use to keep up with demand.

The last time that happened was in 1999.

"We'll need to address it the same way as we did with the harbour," Rice said, referring to the provincial Department of Environment that issued an order last year forcing the city to deal with its overflow problem.

"It wasn't a priority until the federal government made it a priority when they served us (the order)."

Rice made the comments following council's July monthly public meeting Monday night.

The city's pumping stations have been operating at near capacity for a few years now, one of the reasons why it has been searching for a new water source.

That source is being developed in the Milton area but it's going to cost close to \$ 20 million.

That means the city will be waiting for new infrastructure money, set to come in 2014.

In the meantime, the Winter River watershed is trying to keep up with demand. Right now, it's running at 92 per cent capacity.

"It's dangerous," Rice said of the demand on the city's water supply.

Rice said the lack of rain this summer, and the current dry forecast is not helping. He's asking the city to curb its water use as well.

"I mean, they're washing trucks pretty near every day. The city trucks are whiter than Mr. Clean could have them so maybe we'll have them a bit muddy."

People in the city are being asked to cut down on watering their lawns, washing their vehicles, washing their driveways and to conserve in just about every imaginable way.

“We’re asking people to start being conscious of what they’re doing, whether it’s leaving (the water on) to brush your teeth. We’ve got this ingrained habit that our car has to be kept scrubby clean. I leave mine to God. I’ve never washed a car.”

Rice said they are starting to discuss forcing residents to use less water but he wasn’t specific on what the consequences will be if people don’t conserve. He hinted at issuing fines and talked about bringing in water metres.

“We’re not going to go around shooting people who clean their cars or washing their driveway. We’re asking them to be conscious (of conserving water).”

The city is also encouraging people to purchase one of their rain barrels, a recent program that met with lots of success.