

The overall challenge of conservation

Even if the current dry spell ends, water consumers have to become more conscious of conserving the resource

- The Editor, The Guardian (Charlottetown)
- 17 Jul 2012

Capital city officials have talked before about the need to conserve water, but the unusually dry summer this year has prompted them to consider imposing actual restrictions on water use.

It may come to that. With the city using more than 90 per cent of its water supply now, good stewardship demands that everyone cut back on water use. Coun. Eddie Rice, chairman of the city's water and sewer utility committee, told council recently the city has prepared its emergency backup station to keep up with demand — the first time since 1999 that it has had to do this. Right now, the Winter River Watershed is running at 92 per cent capacity. It has been at near capacity for a few years, and the city is developing another source at Milton, but in the meantime, city officials have been encouraging water customers to be more conscious about conserving the resource.

The lack of rain this summer and the current dry forecast aren't helping, so Rice is recommending that consumers go easy on lawn and garden watering and vehicle washing.

All that just seems like common sense and responsible stewardship, and residents should heed the city's appeal. The city itself seems to be trying to set an example by turning off water fountains and cutting back on non-essential use, such as vehicle washing. For plant watering, the city will use a well that's not part of the municipal water supply, along with rain barrel water for filling trucks and tanks.

That's only prudent. If the city's water supply is as taxed as councillors have led residents to believe, then the city has to adjust its own practices and lead by example.

In the end, however, the city may have to bring in water restrictions.

Even if the current dry spell ends, the fact remains that all users of the capital city's water supply must become more conscious of the need to conserve. That may require regulations on such things as outdoor watering — a practice adopted in other Canadian communities.

It may also justify the eventual adoption of citywide water meters whereby consumers pay for the water they use.