

# Tapping into more ideas to conserve water

Water meters, showerhead exchanges and toilet rebates are good starts but more can be done to address issue of water consumption

- The Guardian (Charlottetown)
- 19 Oct 2013

First they came for your toilets. Now they want your showerheads. The City of Charlottetown is leaving no taps unturned as it looks to conserve the precious resource for city residents.

The city began a showerhead exchange program this week where all Charlottetown water and sewer utility customers can bring in an old showerhead with a flow- rate of more than 9.5 litres a minute to exchange for a more efficient model.

Previously, the city introduced a toilet rebate program, which Mayor Clifford Lee says will save an estimated 21 million litres of water a year.

According to Environment Canada, toilets and showers are the No. 1 and 2 offenders when it comes to water use inside the home.

But the city isn't stopping there as it attempts to bring water usage down in the capital. Also this week, city council approved a plan to install water meters on every Charlottetown home by 2019.

Residents will then pay for the water they use, rather than a flat rate. Apart from giving residents an incentive to use less water and pay less to the utility, the meters will also serve as an eye opener for everyone on just how much we all use in the run of a day.

The city is also digging a new well to be hooked up by 2015, has sold rain barrels and has implemented temporary water restrictions, such as banning watering lawns, in the past. All of these measures are good first steps to help address the issue of water conservation.

In 2011, the city almost reached its full water capacity, draining 98 per cent of what it was allowed under provincial environmental laws from the Winter River watershed. So, it's obvious steps had to be taken.

It is unfortunate, though, that the bulk of the conserving is being left to individual homeowners. While residents keep an eye on their meters with every flush, and haul water from their rain barrels to their gardens, bigger users of water are being left largely to their own devices.

While many accuse the huge cruise ships we're seeing more and more of in Charlottetown Harbour of being giant water guzzlers, the facts don't seem to

bear this out. In 2012, when 51 ships came into port, the Charlottetown Harbour Authority used less water than in 2011 when 39 ships docked here. The biggest consumer of Charlottetown's water is, quite necessarily, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. If the city truly wants to solve the issue of water consumption, it needs to put together a task force of health-care, hospitality and recreation representatives.

Low-flow showerheads in Charlottetown homes will only go so far. Turning back the taps in healthcare centres, hotels, restaurants, pools and rinks would really help ease the pressure on the city's watersheds.