

Extracting the truth about water details

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Editor:

Here on Prince Edward Island we do things a little differently. For instance, P.E.I. is the only province in Canada which is 100 per cent reliant on groundwater for domestic use. For those who may know where Charlottetown gets its water, it all comes from the Winter River – Tracadie Bay Watershed at the unsustainable rate of 18 million litres a day. Perhaps that rate would not be so bad if the treated water was returned to the watershed, but alas it is not. Instead of being returned to help the recharge of the water table, it is dumped into the harbour.

Furthermore, this extraction greatly affects the residents of the watershed, drying up private wells and streambeds, decreasing fish stocks, and not allowing local farmers to irrigate their crops. Some may think that the government would not allow unsustainable extraction to continue if it was such a problem. However, in the city's permit from the province, (effective October 2010) it was stated that as no previous permit was in place, the current permit would be based on the average daily pumping rates that matched the usage the year prior, even though the usage that year was unsustainable. The province had also released a new water extraction policy in 2013, which would have helped lower the extraction from Winter River except for a clause which allows existing permit holders to continue their current levels of extraction until it is "reasonably practical" to meet the new guidelines. With streams in Brackley drying up each summer, I believe it might just be "reasonably practical" for Charlottetown to change their water extraction policy.

Some things islanders can do to cut back on water use now include: signing up for the city's water meter initiative, installing water saving devices, and purchasing and using rain barrels. As Islanders we need to come together and reduce water consumption. If we do not take responsibility and action right now, we may leave our future generations herding camels through a red sandy desert.

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