



# The Daily Gleaner

## Water - Tomorrow's Liquid Gold

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Consider this shameful statistic for a moment: Canadians are the second-largest consumers of water in the world, with daily domestic use amounting to over 300 litres of water per person per day. However, according to studies, half of those 300 litres you and I use are wasted. That means every day in Fredericton more than 8 million litres of water are supplied to our homes and treated at our water treatment plants unnecessarily.

We don't think about that wastage much because turning on the tap is so easy. But supplying and treating that water has a high cost. Consider this. For major Canadian cities, such as Toronto, more energy is consumed in pumping water to homes than is used for nighttime illumination. Those energy costs can be measured in dollars and in costs to our environment as a result of the greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere.

According to Environment Canada, morning showers and baths account for more than a third of the water we use, toilet flushing accounts for another third, and laundry accounts for one-fifth. But there's good news too. You can make a difference with just a few little changes. Take five-minute showers instead of baths and you'll use half the water. To reduce even more, install low-flow aerator showerheads and faucets, which can reduce water consumption by more than 60 percent! And if you fix that leaky faucet you will put an end to monthly water waste of up to 95 litres. If you are renovating your bathroom, install a new low-flow toilet, which typically uses 80 percent less water than the regular model. And, don't overlook the kitchen. It will probably surprise you to know that running a fully stacked washer (and letting the dishes air dry) uses less hot water than washing dishes in the sink after every meal, even more so if your dishwasher is an Energy Star-rated appliance.

As for outdoor water use, Environment Canada reports that water consumption in the summer increases by a dramatic 40 percent. That's resulted in a growing number of municipalities promoting an old-fashioned practice—the rain barrel—to store downspout run-off. Aside from easing the strain on municipal water operations by using nature's waterworks to irrigate our flowerbeds, a rain barrel can ease the strain on the sewer systems during rainstorms, meaning less flooding and runoff. And, did you know that washing your car at home uses nearly twice the water of an automatic carwash? Another drawback of home car washing is that dirty water runs down the driveway and into storm drains and eventually rivers, streams, and wetlands, whereas commercial car washes treat their wastewater.

Small changes - both indoors and out - will save you money on your water bill and also reduce your carbon footprint. The equation is simple – the more water you consume, the more energy it takes to pump the water to your house and to treat the water coming from your house to the City's water treatment plants. This 'cycle' takes an enormous amount of energy and hence sends many tonnes of GHGs into the atmosphere. The time has come to reduce and conserve, and to consider our water for what it is – a precious commodity. Your reduction and conservation efforts have two positive impacts on the environment – reduction in water demand and reduction in energy demand.

Being the first city in Canada to reach the Kyoto emissions reduction targets is no small feat. But it can be done. To do it, all of us must change how we live. Start today by changing your water use habits. It all starts with something small - maybe that little voice in your ear saying "Mama you shouldn't let the water run when you're brushing your teeth."

Sonya Hull is a consultant and City of Fredericton Project Manager for the Green Matters greenhouse gas reduction campaign. If you would like more information on how you can reduce your greenhouse gas emissions by conserving water and energy go to [www.greenmattersfredericton.com](http://www.greenmattersfredericton.com) or send an e-mail to: [green@fredericton.ca](mailto:green@fredericton.ca)