

# 'It's crazy the way we waste water'

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Richmond Hill.

The average Canadian uses 340 litres of water a day, 200 more than the average European, said Richmond Hill resident Chad Horenfeldt, program director of the York Children's Water Festival next month in Stouffville. "It's crazy the way we waste water."

The price of our water, typically less than half what it is in Europe, certainly hurts our instinct to conserve. Canada's water may not be priced high enough, suggested Sharpe, who is involved in an extensive federal study of the moraine.

Still, there are fears we will lose some of our water to global warming.

Since records were first kept 52 years ago, 1998 was the warmest year in the southern Great Lakes area and 1999 was the second warmest, according to Environment Canada. Even if low Great Lake levels are not due to climate change, "they are a graphic display of what the future might hold," the department warned last week.

In the past 10 years, the province has seen higher temperatures, less snow and earlier springs — warning signs the government is taking seriously, said Paul Demers, spokesperson for Natural Resources Minister John Snobelen. "There is a trend of global warming that the Ontario government now faces."

Environmentalists say the trend can already be seen in local rivers like the Rouge, once mighty enough to navigate by canoe to its headwaters in York Region.

Down at the marsh where the Rouge empties into Lake Ontario, high water levels from the spring runoff have already disappeared, according to Save The Rouge Valley System president Glenn De Baeremaeker. "It looks like it's the middle of summer there."

Paving land in a river watershed means the ground no longer slowly absorbs water into underground reservoirs like a sponge. Instead, it's flushed through storm sewers and less of it ends up in the river system, De Baeremaeker said.

And less water means a higher water temperature and fewer fish.

The province is set to announce a policy next

month on how municipalities can regulate water resources and their uses, particularly during summer months, Demers said. "The challenge is one of co-ordination."

But NDP Environment Critic Marilyn Churley said municipalities have found it hard to say no to developments in areas like the Oak Ridges Moraine because the Tory government has weakened protections in the planning system.

The Tories took out a clause which forced developments to be consistent with provincial interests (protecting the Oak Ridges Moraine being one) and substituted words which don't carry weight at the OMB or municipal councils, Churley argued this week.

Her private member's bill aimed at reversing this change "is partly about pressuring the government" and keeping issues like the moraine in the public eye, she said.

## Children on board with recycling

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ways to save them a total of 244 million litres of water a year — which is worth \$244,000. "The company sees a payback on their investment very quickly," Brooks said.

And workers check the pipes for leaks, finding and repairing ones that wasted a combined 380 million litres a year.

Water For Tomorrow also supplies a curriculum package to schools, meant to get children to think of water as a finite resource we should be using properly.

Brooks said worries about having to flush twice with a water-saving toilet are "all a bunch of silliness." You only have to shower in Europe to find out how serious people are about saving water there, she added.

May 23 to 26, dozens of interactive exhibits will be used to teach thousands of children about water during the York Children's Water Festival at Bruce's Mill Conservation Area in Stouffville.

—Mike Adler



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