

Water is being squandered, says study

BY GARY PEARSON, CALGARY HERALD MARCH 18, 2010

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While most Canadians say they try to conserve water, not enough is being done to stop the resource from going down the drain, a study shows. According to the third annual Canadian Water Attitudes Study, about 80 per cent of Canadians try to conserve water, although 44 per cent leave the water running while washing and rinsing dishes.

People need to make a more concerted effort to conserve water, says Joe Obad., associate director of Water Matters, a citizen's group. He notes Alberta's pricing system benefits those who squander water. "You actually pay less for water, the more you use it," Obad. said. "We definitely need a pricing system that rewards conservation."

Calgarian Heather Strigter, 44, said she tries her utmost to conserve water. "I never leave the tap running," Strigter said. She said the pricing system should benefit those who are stingy with their water usage.

Eighty per cent of Calgary houses have been equipped with water meters, said Wolf Keller, the city's director of water resources. He said the full implementation of water meters will be complete by the end of 2014. "When finished, people will pay for the water they use," Keller said.

Education is vital in reducing water waste, and the city has been targeting tens of thousands of schoolchildren yearly, he said. The city intends on reducing per capita water use by 30 per cent by 2030 -- the plan is called 30-in-30. "The Bow River is a limited resource and we are trying to be careful with it," Keller said.

The study shows about 10 per cent more Canadians are concerned with saving electricity

than water.

"The findings suggest that Canadians haven't made the link between water and energy conservation," said Bob Sandford, chairman of the Canadian Partnership Initiative of the UN Water for Life Decade. Generating energy requires a lot of water, and until the correlation is made, "we won't achieve anything approaching sustainability," he said.

Twenty-nine per cent of Albertans feel oil is the most important resource -- three times higher than anywhere else in Canada -- while 39 per cent say water takes precedence.

"Water is much more important because we need it to live," said nursing student Lindsey Smith, 23. "Oil is only important for money (reasons)."

According to the study, 25 per cent of Canadians don't know where their tap water flows from, and 49 per cent believe fresh water is Canada's most important natural resource. The study used a sample of 2,022 Canadians from across the country. It is considered accurate to within plus or minus 2.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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