

Recent water research shows that, in general, there is a sufficient amount of good quality water (despite the occasional seasonal gaps or man-made problems) for most everything we want to do here in Eastern Ontario including maintaining a healthy aquatic environment. We know that water is in constant motion and that it occurs in many forms in our area. We learned that around 20% of the Mississippi-Rideau area is made up surface water of one kind or another. And that there is no guarantee that the regular replenishment of groundwater and lakes by seasonal rainfall and snowmelt will continue as it has in the past. We know that several different layers of government and many different government agencies have the responsibility to protect various aspects of our water supply and its quality.

So, in the face of all this water knowledge and responsibility, is there anything that one small Eastern Ontario family or even an individual can do to help protect our valuable supply of clean water?

Indeed there is. There are scores of tips about conserving our water supplies at home, school and office. They include fixing dripping taps, brushing your teeth with the water turned off and using the clothes and dish washers only when full.

It is all about reducing the unnecessary amount of water we use each day (more than 300 litres compared to Europe and Scandinavia at about half that per person per day) and not degrading or abusing the quality of our water by adding harmful substances. In other words, lower quantity and higher quality is the goal.

Here are the top three easy fixes around the house that would be big steps in the right direction...if you can accomplish these, Ontario will be well on the way to protecting our water:

- Make sure that your family's septic system is functioning properly. Faulty/old/non-existent septic systems are one of the prime sources of contamination of surface and groundwater in our area. Call your municipality's septic service provider (either the Health Unit, the municipality itself or the Conservation Authority) for advice on how to do it. This one step is the single best action you can take to protect water quality.
- Next time you replace that old toilet or shower head, take the opportunity to replace the dinosaur with a modern, new low-flow device. There are lots of models available and this one step will help reduce the quantity of water that your family consumes and flushes down the drain each day without any real hardship on your part.
- If you have property (especially near a lake or watercourse), plant a tree in May for each of your children for each of the next ten years. If you live in an apartment, urge the building owner to allow you to plant a few trees on the grounds. Trees are nature's little environmental cleaning stations that

purify the air and water, improve the soil, provide wildlife habitat, buffer wind and noise and they do it all for free for up to 80 years. Planting a tree is the single most effective all-around action you can take to ensure a healthy natural environment for the next generation.

For more information:

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