

**FEDERATED WOMEN'S INSTITUTES  
OF CANADA**

**WATER AWARENESS PROGRAM**



**EVERY DROP COUNTS!**

## WATER AWARENESS PROGRAM

As Women Institute Members, we must be aware of our water resources across Canada. Water is an essential component of all life on Earth and there is no substitute.

We all play a role in protecting and conserving our water. From the highest levels of government policy to individual actions, every drop counts. Canada has the best water quality ranking in the Americas, based on the Environmental Performance Index.

**DID YOU KNOW** – there is over 8500 rivers and 2 million lakes that cover 8.9% of Canada's total. The Great Lakes are the largest system of fresh surface water on Earth, containing approximately 18% of the world's fresh surface water. The longest Canadian river is the Mackenzie River (Northwest Territories-Alberta-British Columbia) at 4241 kilometres. At 614 metres deep, Canada's deepest lake – Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories – could easily submerge the CN Tower. Lake Superior is the largest freshwater lake in the world by area.

Canada is home to roughly 7% of the globe's renewable freshwater, making it the third-largest water supply in the world. So we might think there's an endless supply, but in reality our supply of clean, accessible water is limited. We have to learn to use it more wisely if we want to keep enjoying the social, economic and environmental benefits it provides.

For too long, we have been treating our lakes and rivers without enough care: taking more than we need or releasing industrial pollutants, sewage, chemicals and agricultural runoff into these delicate ecosystems. Human waste and industrial activities cause water pollution that can seriously harm fish and other wildlife. Each body of water is part of a delicately balanced ecosystem in continuous interaction with the surrounding air and land. Freshwater bodies have a great ability to break down some waste materials but not in the quantities discarded by today's society. Both Canada and the United States are affected by the other's actions in lake and river systems along the border. The two countries cooperate under the Boundary Waters Treaty to manage these waters.

**DID YOU KNOW** – that March 22 is World Water Day. During this week of March it is Canada Water Week which is a celebration of water from coast-to-coast. This purpose of these designated days is to raise the overall profile and understanding of water. This is a time to reflect on how we consume water and what we can do to reduce our consumption of our most precious commodity.

**DID YOU KNOW** – that per capita, water consumption in Canada is the second highest in the world, exceeded only by the United States. The average Canadian uses 328 litres of water per day in his or her home in these ways:

- 35% Bathing
- 30% Toilet flushing
- 25% Laundry and cleaning
- 10% Cooking and drinking

## WHAT CAN WE DO TO PROTECT AND CONSERVE OUR WATER?

### In our Homes (Indoors):

- Invest in water-efficient appliances (dishwashers, washing machines)
- Use detergents that are phosphate-free.
- Place a jug of water in the refrigerator rather than running the tap.
- Turn off the water while brushing your teeth – will save up to 8 litres of water a minute.
- Install a low-flow showerhead which will conserve water by at least 25%.
- Have shorter showers – a 15-minute shower uses about 300 litres of water.
- Do not let the water run while you are cleaning fruits and vegetables. Washing them in a partially filled sink instead saves up to 5 litres of water each time.
- Turn taps off tightly. If you find a leak, have it repaired promptly. One leak can waste several thousand litres of water per year.
- Do not defrost foods under running water. Use a microwave or plan ahead and use the refrigerator instead.
- Check your water heater to make sure the thermostat is not set too high. Water is wasted when you add cold water to cool the hot water.
- If you have a dehumidifier – use the water to water plants indoors or out and find other uses.
- Installing low flush toilets that use 6 litres or less per flush can reduce water usage by 40% to 50%.

### In our Homes (Outdoors):

- Lawns and gardens require only 5 millimeters of water per day during warm weather and even less during spring and fall. Do not over-water in anticipation of a shortage. Soil cannot store extra water.
- It is more efficient and effective to water your lawn every three to five days, rather than for a short period each day. Most shrubs and young trees need water only once per week, even in warm weather.
- Lawn clippings are over 50% water and leaving them on your lawn enables you to use less water and fertilizer and produces fewer run-offs.
- Do not turn on sprinklers and leave them running – use shut-off timers or on/off timers.
- To avoid less water loss due to evaporation, water only during the morning or evening.
- To keep your lawns healthy, maintain them at a height of 6.5 centimeters which saves water because taller grass holds water better.
- Wash your vehicle only when absolutely necessary. Do not leave the hose running; use a bucket of soapy water and a tripper nozzle instead.
- Collect rainwater from the eaves of your house in a large garbage pail or rain barrel.
- If you have a swimming pool, use a cover to reduce water loss due to evaporation.
- Water the roots of shrubs and plants and use compost and mulch.
- Replace grass with drought-resistant plants as vegetation reduces run-off.

**In your Community:**

- Never dump hazardous substances down storm drains because they flow directly into waterways.
- Dispose of paints, car fluids and other potentially dangerous substances properly – they can leach into groundwater. Contact your local municipality to learn about the proper disposal method in your area.
- Get involved in a community action project.
- If you have issues or concerns – contact or write letters to your local government.

**Provincial/National:**

- If there are issues or concerns – write letters to your provincial government or national government or prepare resolutions.
- Learn more about the issues and keep up to date on what is happening.
- Check out Environment Canada's funding program that can help an organization get a clean-up project off the ground.
- Check out the Environment Canada website and other websites for information.

**Globally:**

- As climate change begins to affect water around the world, from acidification in the oceans to glacial melting in the mountains, nationwide awareness and action programs will be necessary.
- Melting glaciers, decreasing snow packs and flood threats will threaten the future of our fresh water supply.
- Keep up to date as to what is happening around the world.
- Support ``Water for All`` projects of ACWW.

Water is our most precious commodity and we must learn to conserve it and be environmentally friendly with it. By making small simple changes in our everyday life we can make a difference.

**Follow the three rules of water conservation – reduce, repair and retrofit.**

October 2013

## CONSERVING WATER QUIZ

### True or False

1. June 22 is World Water Day.
2. Canada is home to roughly 5% of the globe`s renewable fresh water.
3. 10% of the water we use in our home is for cooking and drinking.
4. Washing vegetables in a partially filled sink can save 5 litres of water each time.
5. One leak can waste 100 litres of water per year.
6. The average 15 minute shower uses about 300 litres of water.
7. Most shrubs need to be watered once a day.
8. Lawns and gardens require 5 millimeters of water on a warm day.
9. Turning off the tap while brushing your teeth will save 8 litres of water a minute.
10. Installing low flush toilets that use 6 litres or less per flush can reduce water usage by 20%.
11. The average Canadian uses 328 litres of water per day in their home.
12. Defrost foods under running water.
13. On an average, Laundry and cleaning uses 25% of the water used in our home.
14. A low-flow showerhead will conserve water by at least 25%.
15. Check the water heater to make sure the thermostat is not set too low.

## CONSERVING WATER QUIZ ANSWERS

1. False. March 22 is World Water Day.
2. False. Canada is home to roughly 7% of the globe's renewable fresh water.
3. True.
4. True.
5. False. One leak can waste several thousands of water each year.
6. True.
7. False. Most shrubs and young trees only have to be watered once a week.
8. True.
9. True.
10. False. Installing low flush toilets that use 6 litres or less per flush can reduce water usage by 40% to 50%.
11. True.
12. False. Defrost foods by using the microwave or planning ahead and using the refrigerator.
13. True.
14. True.
15. False. Check the water heater to make sure the thermostat is not set too high.