

Every Drop Counts

Frequently Asked Questions about Water Conservation in Ladysmith

Q: Why is the Town of Ladysmith so serious about water conservation? Don't we have plenty of water?

A: Did you know that Canadians use the second highest amount of water per person of all the G8 nations, after the United States? With that in mind, one of Council's strategic priorities is watershed protection and water management, which includes the responsible management of water resources and water conservation.

The Town obtains its water from two sources -- Holland Lake and Stocking Lake. Our ability to capture winter rainfall and snowmelt in our watersheds for summer use is limited by the capacity of our reservoirs. Summer is when the Town uses the most water, receives the least amount of rainfall, and has the least amount of water in our reservoirs.

Our water supply system currently has the capacity to provide quality drinking water to a population of up to 18,000. That said, water is a very precious resource and with global climate temperatures forecasted to rise significantly in coming years, the Town is encouraging citizens to reduce water consumption now in order to protect our future.

Q: The Town has been ordered by Island Health to build a new water filtration plant. Does this have anything to do with our water supply issues?

A: In addition to improving the quality of our drinking water, the new facility will also allow us to improve the reliability of our drinking water supply. We will be able to draw water from both Holland and Stocking Lakes, even during high turbidity periods (generally in winter) thus enabling us to better manage our water sources year round.

In keeping with our Sustainability Vision, the new facility will be a piece of modern infrastructure that will help us meet both our current and future needs for clean, safe and reliable drinking water.



Q: We receive lots of rain and sometimes, a great deal of snow in the winter months. Why do we need to conserve?

A: During winter months, water consumption within the Town of Ladysmith averages around 3200 litres per day. However, in the summer months when water conservation is most critical, even with Stage 2 water restrictions being introduced in early July, Ladysmith's daily July water consumption increased by **37 per cent** over the previous month. This is a concern because the heat creates excess evaporation in Holland and Stocking Lakes. Further, since Holland and Stocking Lakes receive little to no rainfall between May and late October when fall and winter precipitation begins, increases in water usage draws down our water in reserve. That's why we are encouraging water conservation 12 months of the year.

Q: What are the benefits of water conservation?

A: It's no secret that North Americans tend to waste water. People sprinkle their lawns in the summer months, wash their vehicles, boats and sidewalks, and allow our most precious resource to slip down the drain when they brush their teeth or take baths instead of showers. While water conservation during summer months is critical, we can take small steps to protect our water supply all year long, simply because *it is the right thing to do*.

Benefits of water conservation include:

- Environmental protection, particularly during climate change
- Less pressure on our existing water supply
- More efficient local water use
- Affordable water services
- A reduction in the amount of water that requires treatment
- Lowered sewage and infrastructure costs for the Town
- Enough water on hand to fight area forest fires

Q: What are some tips for reducing water consumption?

A: Water conservation not only protects the environment, it also saves money. Here are some simple tips for conserving water at home and in your yard and garden:

- Install a low flow toilet (and apply for a \$75 rebate from the Town)
- Turn off the tap when brushing your teeth, washing your hands, washing dishes, etc.
- Take short showers instead of baths
- Run full loads in your washing machine and dishwasher

- When waiting for running water to get hot or cold, collect it in a watering can or jug to water your plants
- Forgo lawn watering and embrace your brown grass
- Collect rainwater in a barrel and use it for watering plants and gardens
- Use mulch on your gardens to hold water
- Sweep, don't hose off, your driveway, deck, walkway and patio
- Cover your swimming pool and hot tub when not in use to reduce evaporation
- Wash windows with a bucket and squeegee instead of a hose

Q: Will my lawn die if I stop watering it?

A: Established lawns will go dormant and turn brown during hot, dry spells. A good rainfall or cooler weather will help your lawn revive quickly. Watering lawns sparingly or not at all can save up to 17,000 litres of water per household over the summer months.

Q: If water conservation is so important, why does Town staff continue to water playing fields?

A: Playing fields are often built on a sand base for better drainage, however turf grown on a sand base can die if not watered. Due to the high replacement costs of playing fields, the Town believes it is a poor use of public funds to allow playing fields to die because of lack of watering. That said, we irrigate our fields and gardens overnight, which we know is the most efficient and effective time to water.

Q: What else is the Town doing to save water?

A: Over the past few years we have:

- Installed a holding tank at the Transfer Beach water spray park to re-use water for irrigation and park toilets
- Switched to ozone at the public swimming pool so water is changed less frequently
- Installed a computerized optimal irrigation system where everything is programmed, controlled and monitored centrally.

Although we do have certain community assets to maintain that need more or more frequent watering, the Town should be leading by example. We encourage you to let us know when you think we could be doing a better job of conserving water. We're all in this together.

Q: If we are all supposed to limit our water use, shouldn't Council be responsible and limit development and population growth?

Vibrant and resilient communities are dependent on smart growth – development that is carefully and thoughtfully planned allows the burden of new infrastructure, such as water filtration facilities, to be spread among a larger taxpayer base while ensuring that consumption of resources, including water, is done so in a responsible and sustainable manner.