



Thursday, June 12, 2008

For Immediate Release

Water Conservation

Q: Where does York Region get our drinking water?

A: York Region gets water from three sources: Lake Ontario, Lake Simcoe and from underground aquifers. Water comes from Lake Ontario via the City of Toronto and The Regional Municipality of Peel, and services the communities of Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Markham and Aurora (partially). Lake Simcoe services the Town of Georgina. All other areas rely on groundwater provided by aquifers.

Q: What happens to the water before it goes into homes?

A: After water is taken from its source (lake or aquifer), it must be treated at a water treatment facility. York Region has several of these facilities across our municipalities. Once it is rigorously treated, tested and monitored, it is stored in reservoirs. The reservoirs provide potable water to businesses and households.

Q: Why are water conservation measures put in place during the spring and summer?

A: Limits are established by the Ministry of the Environment (MOE) on how much water can be drawn from lakes or from aquifers. These limits are determined by average levels of consumption by communities. Municipalities cannot exceed the limits determined by MOE without being subjected to potential charges under the *Safe Drinking Water Act*. During times of hot, dry weather, when water demand doubles or triples, the demand can exceed supply, dropping reservoir levels to the point where no extra water is available for emergencies (such as fire fighting).

Q: What is a Water Conservation Notice?

A: York Region's Water Conservation Notice is a program that the Region has put in place to ensure that residents are following their local municipal outdoor water use bylaws. These bylaws are in place to protect our water supplies during the spring and summer when resident demand for water is at its highest. Following these bylaws will help to ensure that a full Water Ban is not necessary.

Q: What is a Water Ban?

A: If public demand for water exceeds our capacity to supply it, York Region – in consultation with affected local municipalities – will put a Water Ban in place to ensure that there is an adequate supply of water to handle emergencies (i.e. fires). A Water Ban prohibits the use of outdoor watering.

Q: Do water bans mean there is no more water?

A: No. A ban does not mean that the source of water has been depleted. Put simply, a ban is called when water demand exceeds our ability to supply homes and businesses; whether the limitation is the amount of water that we are licensed to take (by MOE) or by how much our water treatment facilities can draw, treat, store and distribute.

Q: Who enforces outdoor watering bylaws and what are the penalties for breaking the bylaws?

A: Your local municipality enforces its outdoor watering bylaw. Breaking the bylaw can result in a fine of \$5,000.

Q: What is York Region doing to increase water supplies to our growing communities?

A: York Region is aggressively investing in new water supply infrastructure, including more than \$73 million allocated in the 2008 Capital Budget for 85 kilometres of distribution pipes, and new water storage tank in Richmond Hill and a new water pumping station. York Region is also cost-sharing for new water infrastructure with the City of Toronto to increase water supplies.

Q: Why is new development permitted while we have water conservation measures in place?

A: There is enough water available to supply both existing and future residents of York Region for everyday household uses. The greatest challenge comes from extremely high water demand during hot, dry periods, often through the wasteful overwatering of lawns.

Q: What can you do to help ensure an adequate water supply?

A: Follow your local odd/even watering bylaws from Victoria Day to Labour Day, and water only when you need to. Remember that lawns only need one inch of water per week to stay healthy.

Q: Where can you find useful water conservation tips?

A: York Region's award-winning *Water for Tomorrow* program has great water conservation information on its website www.waterfortomorrow.com, including drought resistant plants, water saving promotions, free landscape visits from gardening professionals, watering tips and more.

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