

gulls, herons, and bald eagles have been affected and populations have declined.

The need for urgent action to maintain the health of our waterways is abundantly clear. Although pollution is more often the cause of water problems for Canadians than scarcity, there is also the problem of the demand for water in areas such as the southern prairies and in the interior of British Columbia where the demand already approaches the limits of supply and shortages in dry years are becoming more and more common.

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Problems also exist in how we dispose of our sewage effluent. Only 57 per cent of Canadians are in fact served by waste water treatment plants, compared to some 74 per cent of Americans and 99 per cent of the Swedish population. In addition, 28 per cent are served by sewage collection systems, but the sewage is discharged into a lake, into a river or into the ocean without treatment. In 1984 approximately 2,200 of Canada's 3,250 communities had sewer systems, and of these only 44 per cent had some kind of sewage treatment.

However there are some success stories. The communities of Vernon and Osoyoos in the Okanagan Valley have demonstrated what can be accomplished with innovative approaches to waste management disposal. These communities have learned to put their effluent to work for them, by disposing the treated waste water on to the surrounding grasslands and the fields and crops. Vernon is now attempting to implement a program of wild land irrigation, but I must add that the lack of provincial and of federal commitments for this funding are proving to frustrate their efforts.

It is high time that the federal government took an active role in developing and in funding alternative methods for sewage waste disposal so that other communities across Canada can benefit from these efforts.

Canadians too often take our water resources for granted. We are in fact the world's second largest user of water on a per capita basis. Canadians use 4,100 litres per day and Americans use 6,300 litres per day. Those figures include both domestic and commercial use. The average domestic use for Canadians is a startling 300 litres per day. Our experts tell us that we need to curb the waste of

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our water resources. Our water crisis in Canada is fundamentally a problem of resource mismanagement. According to scientists we can become 90 per cent more water efficient. What is needed is to allow a better husbandry of our water resources and a more thorough understanding of our hydrologic cycle. We need more information about how water supplies are managed before we can implement the detailed management strategies that are needed. Above all, we need to develop a coherent picture about the state of Canada's water supplies, both in terms of quality and quantity.

Canadians, largely out of ignorance, have squandered their water resources. For too long water in Canada has been treated as a free commodity with no financial incentive for conservation. It is estimated that it would take the equivalent of 5,000 litres of water just to put a restaurant meal on the table. The average Canadian uses 300 litres of water per day, but biologically they need only 1 to 2 litres a day for consumption. It takes 10,600 litres of water to grow a half a pound of beef. A McDonald's Quarter Pounder requires 2,790 litres of water just for the beef. That does not include the water needed to grow the tomatoes, lettuce, or the grain for the bun.

One apple tree growing in the Okanagan Valley consumes 465 litres of water each day. When you consider that 70 per cent of our irrigation water is lost to evaporation, it conceivably takes up to 1,500 litres of water each day to feed a single growing apple tree.

There is no doubt about it: water is indeed critical to human survival. That is why it seems reasonable that to tackle the environmental problems before us today we should start with the most basic of all resources—our water.

Canada's federal water policy announced in 1987 has remained essentially a toothless document. It has limited itself to a philosophical statement of the government's goals and its projected objectives.

However the federal water policy does commit the government to a joint co-operative approach to water management with the provinces since under the Constitution Act the provinces in fact exercise direct control over many aspects of water management.