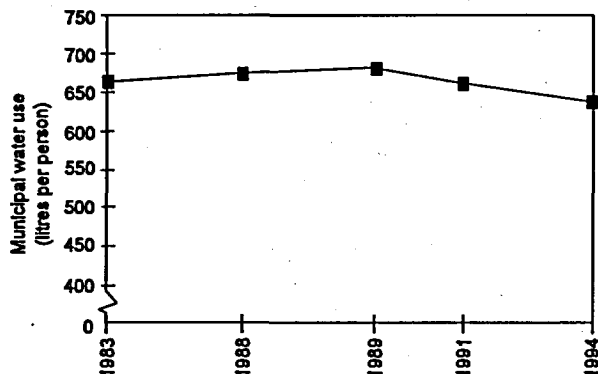


Daily Municipal Water Use per Person in Canada, 1983-1994



Source: Environment Canada

Canadians still use large amounts of water, but industrial and commercial users are leading the way to greater efficiency.

have brought about public participation that has reduced many pollutants entering freshwater and coastal waters.

Canada still faces substantial challenges with regard to our **freshwater resources**. Although many bodies of water are healthier than they were in the 1960s, aquatic ecosystems remain under stress. Canada's priorities include reducing water use from per capita levels that are among the highest in the world; cutting the amount of untreated industrial and municipal wastewater that still enters the environment; and continuing efforts to reduce contaminants in surface water and groundwater.

An emerging issue is the reproductive problems in fish and wildlife produced by endocrine disruptors. In some cases, endocrine disruptors affect the development and reproductive ability of organisms, and there is concern that they could endanger the very survival of some species.

The loss of natural capital represented by a decline in **biological diversity** is a concern. To date, 276 species of wildlife have been designated as being at risk by the Committee on the Status of

Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Of these, ten are extinct and lost forever and eleven others are no longer found in the wild in Canada.

The federal government has introduced its first endangered species legislation, which aims to prevent wildlife species from becoming extinct or lost from the wild and to secure the recovery of species at risk. The proposed Canada Endangered Species Protection Act (CESPA) emphasizes cooperation among all parties—provinces, territories, Aboriginal peoples, farmers, scientists, environmental groups, and industry. This legislation, along with the federal-provincial National Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk, will provide immediate protection for endangered species throughout Canada. The passage of CESPA will in part fulfil key commitments Canada made under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy builds on a range of existing initiatives to respond to the Biodiversity Convention. The Strategy contains directions that address specific issues to conserve and promote the sustainable use of Canada's biodiversity. Developed by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, it draws on the involvement and commitment of a broad range of interests. Quebec and British Columbia are the first provinces to formally report on how they are implementing the Strategy and the Convention.

Another example of trends in protecting biodiversity has been the increasing amounts of protected spaces. In 1970, twenty-three parks made up the Canadian national parks system. Since then, fifteen more have been added. British Columbia added about 8.6 million hectares to its protected areas between 1990 and 1995. Federal tax changes encourage donations of ecologically sensitive lands, thereby helping to preserve biodiversity and wildlife habitats throughout Canada. Still, concerns remain about the relative lack of protection that exists for many ecosystems,