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Water conservation is the future: [Final Edition]

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Abstract (summary)

A new report from Water Sustainability Project at the University of Victoria's POLIS Project on Ecological Governance offers an alternative approach. Thinking Beyond Pipes and Pumps: Top 10 Ways Communities Can Save Water and Money is a practical guide that urges community leaders and water managers across Canada to look to water conservation and efficiency as the basis for a new urban water infrastructure.

POLIS Project on Ecological Governance is a research-based organization housed at the University of Victoria in BC. Among the many research centres investigating and promoting sustainability worldwide, POLIS represents a unique blend of multidisciplinary academic research and community action. Contacts: [Oliver M. Brandes] (in Victoria, BC) at (250) 721-8193 or omb@uvic.ca and Ellen Reynolds (in Victoria, BC) at (250) 472-4487 or ellenr@uvic.ca

Full Text

Each year, more Canadian communities face the one-two punch of scarce water supplies and growing water demands. Some have eked out the dry months with lawn watering restrictions.

Others, like Tofino, BC on Canada's "wet coast" found themselves begging businesses to shut down to save dwindling water supplies. And in Ontario, Waterloo Region plans to plumb the Grand River valley with a pipeline to Lake Erie. Port Alberni too had water restrictions put into effect recently.

A new report from Water Sustainability Project at the University of Victoria's POLIS Project on Ecological Governance offers an alternative approach. Thinking Beyond Pipes and Pumps: Top 10 Ways Communities Can Save Water and Money is a practical guide that urges community leaders and water managers across Canada to look to water conservation and efficiency as the basis for a new urban water infrastructure.

"Too often, communities respond to 21st century water problems with 20th century solutions -- bigger pipes and bigger pumps leading to bigger tax bills" says Michael M'Gonigle, Eco-Research Chair of Law and Policy at the University of Victoria. "Communities are missing out the full potential of water conservation and efficiency."

Based on three years of research, Thinking Beyond Pipes and Pumps makes the case for water conservation as the best "new" source of water for urban areas.

"Water conservation programs are growing in most large Canadian urban centres, but we have barely made a dent in what's possible," says Glen Pleasance, Chair of the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association's Water Efficiency Network. "The potential is huge, and this report provides clear direction on how to capitalize on it."

The report's authors stress that conservation is about more than installing low-flow toilets.

"We need to reconsider what we call urban water infrastructure," says Oliver M. Brandes, Water

Sustainability Project leader and senior research associate at POLIS. "In addition to our current water supply systems, we need to include decentralized technologies and local programs directed at changing behaviour." Tony Maas, co-author of the report adds, "By developing programs that integrate new technologies, pricing and education, communities can delay or eliminate the need for costly and ecologically disruptive infrastructure expansion."

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