

## Paying close attention to life-giving water

by Mark Pavilons

?When the well is dry, they know the worth of water.?

- Benjamin Franklin

Ben had a knack for stating the obvious.

We take fresh, clean water for granted in the GTA, where we likely have the purest water around.

We thinking nothing of turning on a tap or taking long showers.

The blended cost in York for water is roughly \$4.15 per cubic metre. That's equivalent to a little over 13, 10-minute showers, which works out to 32 cents per shower. Yes, we have to pay for it, and for maybe \$2 to \$3 per day, we have the stuff in abundance.

It's a necessity and it's pretty hard to live without it.

My household was without water for some 24 hours recently, while my main shut-valve was being replaced.

Still, instinctively, I reached for the tap a dozen times, forgetting we were temporarily dry.

Only when there are plumbing issues do we realize just how important water is.

I?grew up on a four-acre property outside of Bolton, so I'm well versed in living on well water. We had a shallow, 60-foot tile well and a 100-foot drilled well. We alternated between the two to maintain a constant supply of water. We also had a pump, and 500 feet of pipe from the Humber River which meandered in our back yard. There were many challenging moments growing up in the country.

When we moved to Bolton, I was overjoyed that I could take long showers and flush the toilet whenever I wanted.

Water is the main constituent of Earth's hydrosphere and the fluids of most living organisms. It is vital for all known forms of life, even though it provides no calories or organic nutrients.

Lake Ontario provides drinking water to nearly half of Ontario residents. Of the 12.8 million people who live in the province, 49.2 per cent, or 6.3 million people, get their drinking water from the massive lake. It's by far the most drawn upon source of water to sustain Ontario's growing population.

On the other end of the spectrum are dozens of communities that don't have a municipal drinking water system at all. More than 40 Ontario communities are listed by the province, with a combined population of nearly 140,000 people, that don't have a municipal drinking water system.

King would not have evolved to its current state, had it not been for the ?Big Pipe,??something that caused a lot of controversy several years ago.

It's hard to believe that in 2020, many countries are still struggling with adequate clean water supplies.

In Afghanistan, only 13% of the country's clean water is available to the public.

In Ethiopia, only 42% of the people have access to clean water. The high mortality rate there can be blamed, in part, on unhygienic water.

Chad suffers from a water and food shortage, where people suffer from diseases brought on by drought.

Sadly, 84% of Cambodia's population don't have access to clean water.

The 2010 earthquake in Haiti damaged a lot of the country's water sources, and today, many suffer from a lack of water.

Pakistan, Syria and Egypt all face huge crises.

The worst off is conflict-ravaged Somalia, where starvation due to a lack of water is commonplace.

It's not just Mother Nature, but a lack of water management and the inability of governments in those countries to plan and improve their infrastructure.

Water covers 71% of the Earth's surface, mostly in seas and oceans. Small amounts of water occur as groundwater (1.7%), in the glaciers and the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland (1.7%), and in the air as vapor, clouds (formed of ice and liquid water suspended in air), and precipitation (0.001%).

Water plays an important role in the world economy. Approximately 70% of the fresh water used by humans goes to agriculture. Fishing in salt and fresh water bodies is a major source of food for many parts of the world.

It's common to hear that water is essential for your health. This substance makes up a majority of your body weight and is involved in many important functions, such as flushing out waste from your body; regulating body temperature, and helping your brain function.

Water makes up more than two-thirds of human body weight, and without water, we would die in a few days. The human brain is made up of 95% water, blood is 82% and lungs 90%. A mere 2% drop in our body's water supply can trigger signs of dehydration: fuzzy short-term memory, trouble with basic math, and difficulty focusing on smaller print, such as a computer screen.

We all know about droughts and lack of water in many developing nations. We have that mental image of women and children walking miles to get water and bring it back to their village. My oldest daughter Lexie made such a trip herself during a trip to Kenya. She didn't have to, she wanted to literally "walk a mile in their shoes." Good for her. Maybe we should walk a kilometre with a pail on our heads, just to get a feel for it!

From organizations I have read about, it costs roughly \$5,000 to build a communal well for a small village. That amounts to the annual water bill for maybe half a dozen homeowners. Would I voluntarily pay double my annual water bill to ensure entire villages get clean drinking water? You bet!

As advanced as we are, several Indigenous communities in our country don't have adequate water. And that's tragic. I know we're making inroads, but for a country with an abundant supply and strong infrastructure, there's no excuse. No one in this land of ours should go without life-giving water.

Think about it the next time you dump a half-filled water bottled down the drain.