



SASKWATCH



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WATER

is essential for the survival of all known forms of life

Did you know that only 1% of the earth's water is available for fresh drinking water? 97% is salt water and 2% is frozen in glaciers! Using less water reduces your ecological footprint. And not only does it conserve precious fresh water resources, it eliminates the amount of water that goes through treatment and transport. Less water use = Less CO² emissions!

The average Canadian uses about 350 litres of water each day residentially. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ranks Canada 28 out of 29 in terms of residential water consumption. Only the U.S. uses more water per capita than Canada. Being aware of how much water you use, and taking simple steps to reduce consumption, is the most effective conservation measure there is.

Water Conservation Tips

- Pay attention to those drips. A leak of one drop of water per second can waste about 10,000 litres a year. Check your water meter. If you don't have water running, but the meter is moving, you may have a leak.
- Reduce toilet tank capacity. Replacing it with a water efficient toilet can cut your household use by 30 percent, or about 20,000 litres per year.
- Replace your showerhead with a water efficient model and you'll cut your water usage in half.
- Install faucet aerators and save 50 litres or more every time you shower.
- Use your dishwasher's short cycle and save about 20 litres. Always run a full load in your dishwasher and washing machine.
- When brushing your teeth, shaving or rinsing dishes, be conscious of not letting the water run unnecessarily.
- Keep some drinking water in the fridge rather than letting the tap run until the water is cold.
- Water your lawn earlier in the morning, after the dew has dried. More than 50 percent of the water applied to lawns and gardens is lost to evaporation during peak temperatures, or to runoff from over watering.
- A cistern or rainwater barrel is a great alternative to watering from the tap. Plants love it - and it's free!
- Landscape your yard with plants that don't require a lot of watering. Known as *xeriscaping*, this practice involves options such as reducing the amount of lawn by substituting shrubs and trees for grassed areas. Another good option is to use native grasses and plants, which require less watering than non-native species.
- Take your car to a car wash that recycles water.
- Use a broom or blower to clean your driveway.

(info from Saskatchewan Environmental Society and Saskatchewan Watershed Authority)

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Consumers' Association of Canada, Saskatchewan Branch, active since 1947, is a non-profit, volunteer-driven association committed to fairness in the marketplace and improving the quality of life for consumers. Through information and education, CAC Saskatchewan assists consumers make wise use of personal resources and endeavours to represent the consumer interest in marketplace issues with business and governments.

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Message from the President

by Maura Gillis-Cipywnyk

Finally spring has arrived and with it our spring edition of *SaskWatch*. Spring is a time of renewal ... new beginnings, new growth and new opportunities to be consumer wise. In this edition there are articles on water conservation, prevention of fraud, privacy protection, a tax alert issued by Revenue Canada, information on Community Shared Agriculture, as well as our regular Bits & Pieces section that includes fourteen short articles on a variety of topics. We have also included a National Food Basket prepared by the Heart and Stroke Foundation that provides information about food costs in five Saskatchewan cities.

We encourage you to attend our Annual General meeting on May 26 at the Cave Restaurant in Saskatoon commencing at 12:45 pm. Eric Greene, the new Consumer Protection Branch Registrar with the provincial government, will be our Speaker. The meeting is preceded by lunch at 11:30 am for anyone who wants to socialize. (each person pays for their lunch).

The Association welcomes your comments about this newsletter, our website, or any other issues. Thank you for your interest as a consumer and remember, if in doubt, consult our office before making a purchase.

Heart and Stroke Foundation Conducts Food Basket

In the *2009 Report on Canadians' Health*, the Heart and Stroke Foundation reveals some startling discrepancies between the cost and accessibility of basic healthy food within provinces and across the country. In February 2009, they conducted a National Food Basket comparing prices across the country and included 58 items based upon what is required to feed a family of four for one week. The food basket included items from the four basic food groups in *Canada's Food Guide*: Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, and Meat and Alternatives. Some additions were made in order to compare healthy versus less healthy options of certain food items.

The goal was to sample a range of stores operating across the country. To ensure consistency, each store was part of a major grocery chain or group. The surveyors were advised to not shop at stores that are not part of a national or regional grocery chain or at discount grocery stores (e.g., WalMart, Costco, Food Basics, Price Choppers, No Frills).

Listed below is the information on five Saskatchewan cities.

Saskatoon:	\$243.76
Swift Current:	\$243.45
Prince Albert:	\$231.59
Regina:	\$227.09
Melfort:	\$193.42

More info at: heartandstroke.ca

Prevention Is Key

Fraud by telephone, mail and internet is a serious international problem. It steals your money, your identity and even your self-respect. You can protect yourself by learning to recognize the signs.

Protect yourself by disposing of unwanted personal documents properly.

Request a call-back number when dealing with salespeople over the phone offering you a last-chance deal on office equipment. Take the time to think about the offer and call the company back at its headquarters.

Exercise caution when participating in sweepstakes and other promotions. Legitimate sweepstakes offer participants a chance to win a prize or money with no purchase or entry fee required. If you have to pay to play, the promotion is a scam.

Verify the authenticity of emails sent to you by your bank. Banks generally do not contact their clients by email to obtain information they already have on file.

Endorse cheques only from people you know and regularly conduct business with. If you cash a fake cheque, you will end up paying the bank out of your own pocket.

Navigate your way around online vacation packages carefully. Packages that offer flights and five-star hotel getaways for bargain-basement prices should be considered with caution. There may be strings attached which end up costing you a lot more than you had originally planned.

Take a few moments to educate yourself about the dangers of fraud. The right information can help you avoid falling for scams.

Ignore emails from exiled princes or long-lost relatives requesting money in return for a percentage of a trust fund. Just delete these.

Orders goods from reputable online vendors. If you see advertisements for offers that are too good to be true, they probably are. Be on the lookout for anything that sounds unreasonable.

Notify the Canadian Anti-Fraud Call Centre at **1-888-495-8501** if you suspect that you have been contacted by a scam artist or have been defrauded. *(from competitionbureau.gc.ca)*

Privacy and Fraud

The Canadian Bar Association's presentation on Privacy and Fraud highlighted four points for consumer protection

1. Shred any papers containing personal information, identification, records or private documents.
2. When using ATMs try to use your own bank's machine and take note of any irregularities about the machine, for example an added part to the machine.
3. Do not carry your SIN card and/or your birth certificate copy with you as these two pieces of ID are the essential pieces for thieves.
4. Make sure your computer system has up-to-date firewall software.

by Jane Finnie

Your Water Footprint

People use lots of water for drinking, cooking and washing, but even more for producing things. The Water Footprint looks at the direct and indirect water use of an individual, community or business and is defined as the total volume of freshwater used to produce the goods and services. If you're interested in learning more about your water footprint, check out the Water Footprint Network's web site at: www.waterfootprint.org

\$50 Rebate for Replacing Old Toilets

The Saskatchewan government is spending \$11 million to help people replace their old toilets. This program will give \$50 rebates to people who replace high-volume toilets (use 13 or more litres of water per flush) with low-volume ones (use 6 or less litres per flush). The province hopes 200,000 toilets will be replaced saving 15 million litres of water per day and 20,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide. More info at: 306.694-3900.

New Home Warranty Program

The New Home Warranty Program of Saskatchewan (NHWP) is a private, non-profit Corporation and a member of the Canadian Home Warranty Council of the Canadian Home Builders' Association. Operations are paid for through membership fees and a fee charged to enroll each house. Membership is voluntary, although both Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and its private equivalent, the Genworth Financial Canada, require the builder to belong to a Warranty Program in order to receive mortgage insurance on high ratio loans (90% or higher). NHWP provides a third party guarantee of the builder's warranty and undertakes to perform the builder's warranty obligations should the builder default. A builder's own warranty is only as good as the level of service the company wishes to perform or for as long as the company is in business. NHWP builder members register all their 'for sale' housing. For more information, phone: 306.373-7833 or Email: Director@NHWP.org. Web: www.nhwp.org

3rd Annual Solar Fair at Craik Eco-Centre

Join engineers, teachers, scientists, homebuilders, environmentalists and citizens from across the province, in a two day Solar Fair on June 20 & 21. Hosted by the Craik Sustainable Living Project, there will be Seminars, Workshops and a Trade Show. Early registration is recommended, as space is limited. Apply now for a booth at the Trade Show. Email: eade@sasktel.net. Registration forms available at: www.craikecovillage.ca

Participate in the EcoLawn Project

The EcoLawn Project is a research project whose objective is to find an alternative to non-native lawn grass. They will work with participants to plant common yarrow, which is a native drought-tolerant leafy plant suitable as a lawn alternative. The only thing you need is to provide an open area in your yard (maximum size: 30 sq ft) that is ready for planting. Participation in this project is free. For more info contact: malin.hansen@uregina.ca (from *SEN Info Bulletin*)

Go Green Funding for Saskatchewan Community Recycling Programs

Public recycling programs in Saskatchewan will receive a total of \$2 million to sustain their operations. "Through no fault of their own, these recycling programs are struggling to survive because economic conditions have changed, but Saskatchewan's commitment to recycling has not," Environment Minister Nancy Heppner said. "Bridge funding is essential to keep these services operating while we continue to work with stakeholders on developing an industry-led, province-wide, recycling stewardship program."

Fridge and Freezer Tips

To store food safely, set your freezer to about -18° C and refrigerators at 3 to 4° C. Setting them colder than that does not improve their ability to preserve food and it wastes electricity. Avoid overfilling refrigerators and blocking air circulation grilles as this can result in freezing food and uneven temperatures.

Toll Free Numbers

SaskTel reminds people that only numbers with the prefix **800**, **877**, and **888** are toll free. These prefixes, which are not interchangeable, are used by simply dialing 1, followed by the prefix, followed by the 7-digit number. All other prefixes, including 809, are **not toll free** prefixes and long distance charges will be applied to your phone bill.

Gov't of Canada Endorses Life-Saving Technology For Canadian Vehicles

A new safety regulation is being proposed, requiring Electronic Stability Control (ESC) to be installed as standard equipment on all light-duty vehicles for sale in Canada, beginning September 1, 2011. ESC is a technology primarily designed to assist drivers in maintaining control of their vehicle in situations such as emergency manoeuvres (swerving or braking to avoid an obstacle) and cornering on slippery surfaces. Data gathered by Transport Canada indicates that vehicles equipped with ESC were involved in approximately 30% fewer severe collisions, involving loss of control, than non-ESC equipped vehicles. Based on 2006 data, if all passenger vehicles were equipped with ESC, there would be at least 225 fewer deaths and 755 fewer people seriously injured on our roads each year. More info at: www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/tp/tp14651/vs200701/menu.htm.

Door Handles That Can Kill Bacteria

Making door handles, taps and light switches from copper could help defeat antibiotic-resistant superbugs. A study found that copper fittings rapidly killed bugs on hospital wards, succeeding where other infection control measures failed. It is believed that the metal 'suffocates' germs, kills off the deadly MRSA and C difficile superbugs, and kills other dangerous germs, including the flu virus and the E coli food poisoning bug. During the ten-week trial on a medical ward, a set of taps, a lavatory seat and a push plate on an entrance door were replaced with copper versions. The copper items had up to 95 percent fewer bugs on their surface than non-copper versions whenever they were tested. (from mercola.com)

Kijiji: Reduce Reuse Recycle

Before making a purchase or getting rid of anything, check out Kijiji - a free, local, classifieds website that offer a convenient way for people in the same city to trade, share ideas, and buy and sell goods and services. Kijiji (pronounced key-gee-gee) is available in 1,200 cities around the world, with Canada having over 60 cities coast to coast. For access, simply google Kijiji, then click on the city you want.

PWD Online

Persons With Disabilities Online pulls together information to strengthening the quality of life for people with disabilities. The site connects you with disability related programs and services, including: accessible travel and tourism options; assistive computer technologies; mapping for the visually impaired; employment/education training opportunities; health information; tax and financial benefits; and rights. Check out: www.pwd-online.ca

How Everything Works

Ever wonder what that silver stuff inside an Etch-a-Sketch is, how aspirin stops headaches, or how a cordless phone works? You can find the answers to these questions and more by clicking on: www.howstuffworks.com. Use the database to search, or just read the question of the day to learn interesting tidbits. Plus, click on 'novelty' to learn how future inventions such as teleportation will work!

Earth Hour 2009 Huge Global Success!

With almost a billion people mobilized, Earth Hour 2009 was the biggest environmental demonstration in history! The message was heard around the world with 3,937 cities and towns turning out their lights, across 88 countries. Millions of Canadians took part in more than 288 cities and municipalities along with thousands of businesses, helping to make our skylines go dark You can make every hour Earth Hour by joining WWF-Canada's web-based community, *The Good Life!* The next few months will be critical as we wait to see how global leaders react to this united call for action on climate change. For more information: wwf.ca/earthhour

Community Shared Agriculture (CSA)

Restoring the Link Between Farmers and Consumers

Our food supply is being increasingly threatened by globalization of agriculture, the primary purpose of which is to provide profit for the agricultural corporations and their investors. Many people are concerned about the quality of food available, the chemicals being used, and who controls their food supply.

Keith Neu, an organic farmer from Hudson Bay, started his Community Shared Agriculture Project - *ECO Farm* - in the spring of 2007 and currently has about 60 members. The basic plan is simple: members sign a contract each spring and include 12 post-dated cheques. Keith then supplies the preordered food twice a month during growing season, and once a month during winter and spring. Products include

garden produce (fresh, frozen, canned, dried, pickled), beef, chicken, eggs, flour, flax and other available food throughout the year.

Community Shared Agriculture has many advantages for both consumer and farmer. Consumers know who produces their food and how it's produced. They support local, sustainable agriculture and ensure that farmers receive a fair price. They support the environment, get fresh, healthy, tasty food, and have a farm they can go to. Because both consumer and farmer share in the production risks and benefits, farmers are provided with the stability and security they need by having a steady income, and they get a community that cares about the farm and the farmer. More info: km.neu@sasktel.net.

Plastic Bags are Forever

Worldwide, we use about one million plastic bags every minute! 500 billion to 1 trillion plastic bags are used and discarded every year which has used up 11 billion barrels of a non-renewable resource to satisfy our want for convenience.

Plastic ends up in landfills, in our oceans, and as litter strewn across the globe. This plastic pollution causes more than 1 million seabirds, 100,000 marine mammals, and even more fish to die, in the North Pacific alone, every year. And it's not just marine animals that are poisoned by all this plastic. People are now ingesting plastics every day, and being exposed to a potentially deadly mix of plastic chemicals and additives.

The first plastic "baggies" were introduced in the U.S. in 1957. In just 50 years, our thoughtless consumption has managed to turn parts of our oceans into a plastic concoction that now contains **six times more plastic by weight than plankton!**

Except for a small amount of plastic that has been incinerated, every single bit of plastic manufactured in the last 50 years still remains somewhere in the environment - and it's already surpassed 1 billion tons. (www.treehugger.com)

Power from Dancers

With concerns about the environment at an all-time high, a nightclub owner from Britain is installing a dance floor that will harness power from the dancers. The dance floor uses piezoelectrics to collect the power: as people dance, electricity-producing crystals under the floor are compressed, producing a small current. The current is collected by embedded batteries, which in turn provides power to lights, audio systems, and other parts of the club that consume electricity. The club is also going to offer free entry to those who can prove they got there by foot, bike or public transport.



There's also an eco-club in Rotterdam, Holland that's installing an energy-generating dance floor, as well as toilets flushed with rainwater, walls that change color in response to temperature fluctuations, and a rooftop garden where clubbers can enjoy an organic beer with friends.

"All you have to do is dance to save the world," is their motto.

TAX

Revenue Canada Warns of Mail Scam

ALERT

The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is warning taxpayers to be aware of a recent scam where some Canadians are receiving a letter fraudulently identified as coming from the CRA and asking for personal information. The letter is **not** from the CRA. A PDF version of this letter is available on the CRA Web site at www.cra.gc.ca/alert.

The letter claims that there is “insufficient information” for the individual’s tax return and that in order to receive any “claims,” they will have to update their records. The letter attaches a form specifically requesting the individual’s

personal information in writing, via fax or email, including information on bank accounts and passports. This letter is not from the



CRA and Canadians should not provide their personal information to the sender.

All taxpayers should be vigilant when divulging any confidential information to third parties. The CRA has well-established practices to protect the confidentiality of taxpayers’ information.

The CRA has notified the proper law enforcement authorities of this scam.

For information about this and other similar scams, or to report deceptive telemarketing activity, visit: www.phonebusters.com, email: info@phonebusters.com, or call: 1-888-495-8501.

Warnings & Recalls

For all recalls and detailed information, go to: www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cps-recalls

Good Neigh Bear[®] by State Farm[®]: The hard plastic eyes on the 28cm Good Neigh Bear[®] can easily detach and pose a choking hazard to young children.

Safety 1st SmartLight Stair Gate: The product is a white metal gate with a grey handle and a motion sensor nightlight. The hinges mounting the gate to the wall can break, posing a potential fall hazard to children when used at the top of the stairs.

VOV Liquid Eye-liner: This eyeliner contains high numbers of bacteria, including *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, which is known to cause microbial keratitis in contact lens users, and is responsible for pneumonia and other infections in individuals with lowered immune systems.

Deluxe 12V Heated Seat Cushion by Elegant: Due to a manufacturing defect, the insulation that surrounds the heating elements could shift and, in some cases, cause the fabric to heat and smolder.

L.L. Bean Stabilicers Lite Ice Cleats: The elastic harness system attaching the cleats to the footwear can detach, posing a fall hazard to consumers.

Rubber Duck Toys: These squeeze toys have a squeaker inside the ducks that can be easily removed posing a choking hazard to young children.

Intermatic Digital Timers: An internal grounding contact may be misaligned and could allow for an intermittent contact with the ground pin of a three-prong plug when the product is plugged into the timer's receptacle, posing a potential shock hazard.

Jetboil Personal Cooking Systems: A tight valve attached to the stove's fuel source can allow gas to leak, posing a fire hazard to users.

General Electric 2-Slice and 4-Slice Digital Toasters: An electrical short between the heating element and the bread cage, in some units, can pose a risk of fire or electrical shock.



Save a Drop . Save a Lot

Turning the tap off when you brush your teeth or installing a low-flow showerhead both save about **10 litres of water every minute!** March 22 was *World Water Day*, and Saskatchewan's commercial Crown water utility, SaskWater, believes that without safe, reliable water services, our communities and businesses cannot survive. "We remain steadfast in our commitment to help communities understand the true value of water in order to ensure a reliable supply now and in the future," SaskWater president Stuart Kramer said. SaskWater's "*Save a Drop. Save a Lot*" campaign aims at educating people on what they can incorporate into their everyday routines both inside and outside their homes to do their part and save water. For more information and tips, visit: www.saskwater.com/conservation, phone: 306.694-3729 or email: gayle.zimmerman@saskwater.com

The Consumers' Association of Canada
(Saskatchewan Branch) Inc.

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday May 26, 2009

at

The Cave

(2720 8th Street)

Luncheon: 11:30 a.m.

(Pay your own)

AGM: 12:45 p.m.

All welcome • No charge

For more information:

#306 - 220 3rd Ave. S, Saskatoon. S7K 1M1

Ph: 306-242-4909. Toll free: 1-888-395-5661

Email: office.cacsk@sasktel.net

www.consumersask.com

Membership / Subscription

- I'd like a one-year CAC/SK membership (includes a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch*) \$ 25.00
 - I'd like a one-year subscription to *SaskWatch* (4 issues) \$ 10.00
 - I'd like to make a donation of \$ _____ \$ _____
- Total enclosed: (**make cheques payable to CAC/SK**) \$ _____

- I would like to become a CAC Saskatchewan volunteer. I am interested in volunteering in the following areas: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Street: _____ City: _____ Code: _____

Renewal Notice:

Your membership expiry date
is on the top of your address label.

We hope you will renew your membership.