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TAKE THE CAPE TOWN CHALLENGE TO REFRAME YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WATER

Anyone who regularly reads the “Letters to the Editor” section of our local newspapers knows that water (or lack of it, in summer months) is the number one concern of Coastal residents. Even in the Town of Gibsons, where we benefit from the relative abundance of the Gibsons Aquifer, there are questions about how climate change and population growth might affect our water supply.

It is a serious issue. In recent years, the Coast has experienced longer periods of drought and water shortages. This year, given a historically low snowpack, the SCRCD is already anticipating water restrictions that may begin earlier, and last longer, than ever before.

While, local municipal governments are actively working on infrastructure solutions, these long-term solutions will take time. Accordingly, our local governments are also working together to educate and inspire Coastal residents to make the individual changes required to dramatically reduce their personal water usage and conserve the water we do have.

It’s been done before. Cape Town, South Africa, recently endured the harshest and most protracted drought in recorded history – a drought so bad, that the government was forced to contemplate “day zero”, the day the city would shut off the taps and citizens would have to travel to water dispensing points to collect a daily water ration. In response, the government restricted each citizen’s water use to 50 litres per day and mounted a relentless, multi-platform communication, education and awareness campaign. Their efforts paid off, with Cape Town achieving a world record in reduction in water consumption of 55% in an unprecedented window of time.

While our water challenges may not be as serious as those faced by Cape Town, they do require urgent action – and not by local government alone.

That’s why I am asking our local schools (and all Coastal residents) to take the “Cape Town Challenge” on Sunday, May 26 and experience for one day what it would be like to limit daily water use to 50 liters per person (compared to the 250 litres the average Gibsons residents currently uses each day.)

Multiple resources, including a water calculator and link to Cape Town’s water-saving tips to help people stay within their daily allocation have been posted at gibsons.ca/community/cape-town-challenge. There is also a comprehensive water info display in Gibsons’ Town Hall foyer. Please visit them for water-saving ideas and tools you can easily incorporate into your life. Drop me a line at mayor@gibsons.ca to share your own tips, or your experience taking the Cape Town Challenge.

The solution to our water challenge lies with all of us. As a community, we urgently need to reframe our relationship with water – and we need to start that work today.

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“Nature is our most valuable asset”

