



RESIDENTIAL AND
CIVIL
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Constructing Ontario's Future

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RCCAO study finds Ontario consumers paying \$700 million a year for water that never reaches their taps

TORONTO (June 10, 2009) – Leaky and broken pipes are draining millions of cubic metres of drinking water from systems across Ontario and hundred of millions of dollars from consumers' pocketbooks each year.

A new study released today by the Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario (RCCAO) finds that municipal water systems in the province experience leakage rates ranging from 10 to 50 per cent. It is conservatively estimated that about one-quarter of the drinking water in Ontario is pumped into the ground.

That's some 327 million cubic metres of water lost each year – enough to fill about 131,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

In the Greater Toronto Area alone, a 25-per-cent leakage rate represents a loss of more than 120 million cubic metres of water a year – enough to fill more than 50,000 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Residents end up paying for this water even though it never reaches their homes. It is projected that this massive leakage costs Ontario ratepayers some \$700 million annually. If the environmental costs are included, the price tag would be closer to \$1 billion a year.

In addition, about 30 per cent of the energy used to pump the water through these systems could be saved if leakage was addressed. That would amount to about \$18 million in energy savings a year, and reduced energy usage would also contribute to a significant lowering of greenhouse gas emissions.

There are a host of negative costs and impacts associated with leaky pipes:

- Leakage can cause basement flooding, erosion of foundations, service disruptions, and in extreme cases, sink holes. Businesses and homeowners are affected.
- Treated water contains chlorine, and this may flow into sensitive water bodies.

- Leaking sewer lines result in effluent being discharged into the environment.
- There can be increased risks to human health.

University of Toronto civil engineering professor Tamer El-Diraby, lead author of the report, said it is no longer good enough for governments to consider only the short-term operating impacts of infrastructure projects. “When governments evaluate return on investment, they must also assess the environmental and social benefits,” he noted. “The logical conclusion is for governments to aggressively tackle the rehabilitation of leaking pipes.”

Andy Manahan, Executive Director of the RCCAO, said Ontario’s Green Energy Act ushered in a series of measures designed to stimulate conservation at the household level. “The people of Ontario are doing their bit to conserve. Now it’s time for governments to do the same,” he stated. “The province should educate and encourage more municipalities to incorporate conservation into their decision-making.”

The full study is available at www.rccao.ca.

At 10:30 a.m. today, Andy Manahan and Tamer El-Diraby will be available for interviews at a watermain construction site at the Southeast corner of St. George Street and Lowther Ave. in downtown Toronto.

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The RCCAO is an alliance composed of management and labour groups in the construction industry. Its goal is to work in cooperation with governments and related stakeholders to offer realistic solutions to a variety of challenges facing the sector.