

# EDUCATIONAL CARD *on universal access and consumption of drinking water*

 **A** Read carefully the following text.

## I'm thirsty!

There is nothing more thirst-quenching and refreshing than a glass of water! For the population living in the developed countries, access to water is made possible by simply turning the tap. In this respect, Canada enjoys a privileged situation in terms of access and quality of water. However, for many countries around the world, drinking water access is an essential stakes for the survival of millions of people.

Despite the fact that water covers 70% of the planet, fresh water used for personal, industrial and agricultural purposes constitutes only 2,5% of all water and is hard to access because it is located in deep underground reservoirs or on glaciers. However, this fresh water should satisfy the needs of all the individuals on the planet as long as we use it responsibly. Unfortunately, at present time, this is not the case...

All around the planet, 1.2 billions people do not have access to drinking water and 2.4 billions lack a purifying treatment. This terrible situation will get worst if nothing is done to prevent it and could lead to, within 20 years, a moderate to severe water deficiency for two out of three people. Moreover, we estimate that more than half of the 500 most important waterways in the world are currently over polluted or drying out because of overexploitation.

Similarly to the oil reserves, the state of this situation makes water control a strategic stake. Note that the UN has identified 300 zones of potential conflicts about water and many companies would like to monopolize this resource to commercialize it.

The status of water is not yet recognized as fundamental human right such as the right to live, to be healthy and to have food. Some would like us to consider water as a merchandise to be sold according to the principles of offer and demand, while others would like water to be seen as a commun heritage of humanity (and not the private sector).

In any case, we cannot stay indifferent to the serious problematic of water access. What are some steps we are ready to adopt as individuals and as a society to make good use of this ressource that is growing scarce?

 **B** After reading this text, what is your opinion on the following questions?

1. What questions you the most in this text?

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2. According to the text, list three factors that contribute to amplify the problematic on drinking water access.

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3. Should water be seen as merchandise or a common good? Explain your answer.

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## Did you know that...

·Ten countries share 60% of the fresh water resources worldwide.

·One out of six person on the planet doesn't have water.

·It is estimated that every 8 seconds, one child dies because of a disease related to the shortage, to the contamination of the water or because of a lack of sanitary services.

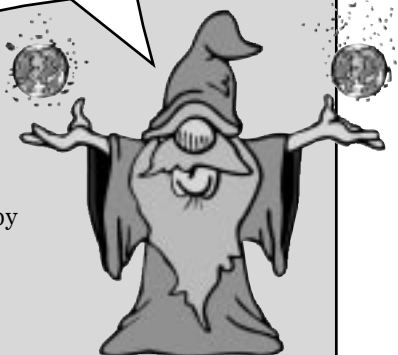
·An American consumes about 600 litres of water per day, compared to 10 to 20 litres consumed by an African.

·The year 2003 was proclaimed "year of fresh water" by the UN.

·Shortage problems linked to pollution and overexploitation of the water tables already threaten many communities in Quebec.

·Quebec's lakes and rivers are being polluted with acid rain coming from highly industrialized regions in the USA. Pollution has no frontiers!

## Note these facts





**D** Among the ten causes given below, choose six that are related to water pollution and rarity.

- Resource wasting
- Construction of bridges over rivers.
- Increase of water usage for the world's population.
- Excessive fertilizer and manure spreading.
- Pumping of water table for commercial use.
- Usage of air tanker to put off forest fire.
- Climate change (due to greenhouse gas).
- Unequal geographical distribution of fresh water.
- Deforestation
- Development of road infrastructure.

**E** Among the ten following answers, choose seven consequences of rarity and pollution of water on people and their community.

- Deterioration of ecosystems.
- Decrease of desertification.
- Increase in diseases related to contaminated water.
- Impoverishment of agriculture soils.
- Easier daily tasks for people.
- Poverty, famine, human deaths.
- Decrease in costs linked to water purification.
- Contamination of water tables with chemical agents.
- Populations moving in search of water.
- Conflicts between countries for the water resources.

### How many litres of water per day do you use?



**F** With the information provided below, calculate the water consumption according to the following daily activities: brushing your teeth, taking a bath, drinking and flushing the toilet.

- Each time we flush the toilet, we use 20 litres of water.
- For each bath, we fill up the bathtub with approximately 150 litres of water.
- Taking a shower consumes 20 litres of water per minute. (Some showers have reduced debit of water and use up only 10 litres per minute)
- If you leave the water running when you brush your teeth, you use up about 7.5 litres of water.
- One litre of beverage corresponds to 4 glasses of water (water, juice, soda).

For a person drinking six glasses of beverage per day, ten 3-minute showers per week, flushing the toilet four times a day and brushing his/her teeth 3 times a day.

What is there consumption for one week? \_\_\_\_\_ for one day? \_\_\_\_\_

Now try to evaluate your own consumption of water on a daily basis for these four activities.

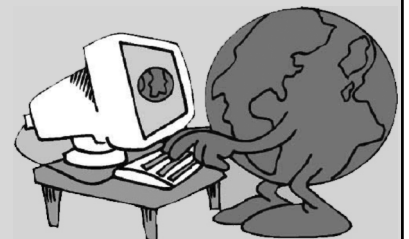
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List some actions you could take to reduce your consumption of water.

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Don't hesitate to browse through the following references to learn more about on universal access and consumption of drinking water

- [www.unesco.org/water/index\\_fr.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/water/index_fr.shtml)
- [www.worldwatercouncil.org](http://www.worldwatercouncil.org)
- [mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/education/eau/maison/index/htm](http://mrw.wallonie.be/dgrne/education/eau/maison/index/htm)
- [www.menv.gouv.qc.ca/eau/politique/](http://www.menv.gouv.qc.ca/eau/politique/)
- [www.cstm.qc.ca/in-terre-actif/](http://www.cstm.qc.ca/in-terre-actif/)
- [www.eausecours.org](http://www.eausecours.org)



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