

After a cold and snowy winter, many communities across the province are concerned about the potential for flooding this spring. I want to take this opportunity to update you on how my ministry responds to flooding and how our staff may be involved in your community during flood season.

The Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is responsible for flood forecasting and warning at the provincial level in Ontario. MNR works with conservation authorities (CAs) and Environment Canada to forecast when and where flooding is likely to occur.

MNR and CAs monitor watershed and weather conditions to predict water levels and flows, and issue flood messages. Flood messages help municipalities notify the public of developing unsafe river and lake conditions and advise them to take precautions.

Preparing for Flooding

The MNR's Surface Water Monitoring Centre (SWMC) performs daily assessment of flood hazard potential. Through the SWMC, the ministry:

- maintains a daily streamflow watch that collects and analyzes streamflow and water level data;
- maintains a daily weather watch that collects and analyzes weather data and forecasts;
- measures watershed conditions daily, including depth of snow pack;
- runs models to determine flood potential by looking at soil conditions, snow pack conditions, runoff potential and Great Lakes storm surge potential; and
- operates automated alarms when hazardous weather conditions occur.

The ministry monitors flood conditions 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is able to contact conservation authorities and other stakeholders immediately with updates.

When the Risk of Flooding is High

When conditions indicate an increased potential for flooding, my ministry issues flood messages to appropriate conservation authorities and MNR District Offices by e-mail and fax. After hours, conservation authorities and MNR District Offices are also contacted by phone. Flood messages are relayed to affected stakeholders, including Ontario Power Generation, CN-CP Rail, the Ministry of Transportation, Emergency Management Ontario, and isolated First Nations communities.

Flood messages are also issued by local conservation authorities based on local knowledge of watershed conditions and on ministry information. In parts of the province not covered by a CA, flood messages are issued by MNR District Offices. Local flood efforts are managed by municipalities, with assistance from MNR and other government partners. Current flood messages and information are accessible to the public at www.ontario.ca/flooding.

The ministry's Emergency Management network is activated when required. The ministry has regular daily contact with Emergency Management Ontario regarding current conditions and flood potential.

I want you to be assured that our best efforts are underway to inform the public, provide reliable and immediate updates, and limit impacts as much as possible. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the SWMC duty officer at (705) 755-5201 or Surface.Water@ontario.ca.

Sincerely,

Original signed by David Orazietti

David Orazietti
Minister of Natural Resources