



EXPECTING MAJOR FLOODING ON THE OTTAWA RIVER (Lake Coulonge to the Montreal Region)

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Monday April 17, 2023 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee warns that levels and flows along the Ottawa River continue to rise rapidly due to on-going snowmelt combined with rain runoff in the central and southern portions of the basin. Major flood levels may be exceeded in flood prone areas along the river between Lake Coulonge and the Montreal region starting Wednesday, April 19. The major flood level is defined as the level at which one or several streets are beginning to flood, with several houses/buildings or neighbourhoods being affected. Water levels are currently expected to remain well below historical flood levels on the main stem of the Ottawa River. **Additional bulletins will be published if flood risk is expected to increase further.**

River Conditions Forecast / Flooding Risk*: As of the end of March, large portions of the unregulated area in the south and southwest of the watershed had accumulated above normal water content in the snowpack. The record-setting temperatures last week triggered a rapid melt of this snow, leading to rapidly rising water levels and increased flow in tributaries and on the main stem of the Ottawa River from Lake Coulonge down to the Montreal area. The rain currently falling on Monday April 17 and expected to continue into April 18 will add to the flow in these watercourses. Peak river conditions remain dependent on snowmelt and rainfall amounts. A rainfall event is forecasted next weekend (April 22), which is expected to bring additional spring runoff into the main stem of the river at a time when flows are near flood thresholds. There are no reservoirs in this lower portion of the watershed, therefore there is no capacity to hold back these flows. Storage in the northern reservoirs is being used to reduce river flows to downstream areas.

Rising levels along the main stem of the Ottawa River over the coming week are expected to reach or exceed the major flooding thresholds in several locations from Lac Coulonge down to the Montreal region. If you have a flood emergency, please contact your municipality.

Reservoir Regulation Strategy: Increases in water levels along the main stem of the Ottawa River in the spring are caused by increased inflows. The principal reservoirs in the northern part of the watershed are storing a large portion of runoff in this portion of the basin, thereby reducing flows in downstream areas. The flow released from the principal reservoirs currently contributes only a small fraction of flow on the main stem of the Ottawa River, the majority of the flows are a result of the uncontrolled tributaries. It is important to note that reservoirs must retain some storage capacity should weather conditions become wetter in the coming weeks. If wet conditions do occur and the reservoir were already full, the river levels downstream could eventually be much higher than those currently forecast. Dams located in the central and southern portions of the basin are essentially “run of the river” facilities with no significant storage capacity. These facilities are not able to reduce flows and the levels associated with increased spring runoff. During this critical freshet period, the Regulating Committee takes actions to mitigate the amount of flooding and will continuously monitor conditions at all points along the river.

The Regulating Committee works closely with provincial agencies responsible for issuing flood-related messages. In Ontario, Conservation Authorities and District Offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry issue local flood-related messages and information to municipalities, Indigenous communities and other key agencies involved in flood preparedness and response. Current flood-related messages can be viewed on-line on the individual conservation authority websites and on the provincial flood webpage: <https://www.ontario.ca/flooding>. In Quebec, the Ministère de la Sécurité publique through the Centre des opérations gouvernementales and the Regional Directorates of Sécurité civile collaborate with municipalities to protect residents. Monitoring of flood conditions can be viewed at <https://geoegl.msp.gouv.qc.ca/adnv2/>.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Website: Current and forecast conditions on the Ottawa River along with conditions at the principal reservoirs in the system may be obtained by consulting our website. A general [four-day forecast](#) is also provided at key locations within the basin during the spring freshet period.

www.ottawariver.ca (English)

www.rivieredesoutaouais.ca (French)

Telephone: You can call 1-888-621-0059 to hear a recorded message describing the river conditions forecast.

Twitter: Follow us to be notified when press releases are issued, when we begin daily updates of the River Conditions Forecast message or the four-day forecasts at reference locations on our website, or when news bulletins are posted on our website.

twitter.com/ORRPB(English)

twitter.com/CPRRO(French)

About the Ottawa River Regulating Committee: The group consists of the following agencies that are responsible for the collaborative flow management of the principal reservoirs within the Ottawa River watershed: Hydro-Québec, Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs du Québec, Ontario Power Generation, and Public Services and Procurement Canada. In Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, as an associate member of the Regulating Committee, contributes important hydrometeorological information and plays a key role in disseminating information in Ontario.

Frequency of Press Releases: The Regulating Committee issues a press release when the spring freshet season is starting on the Ottawa River. It issues other press releases, as needed, when it anticipates that river conditions on the main stem of the Ottawa River may exceed significant flood levels.

***Subject Area:** The focus of the “River Conditions / Flood Risk” report is on the main stem of the Ottawa River (from the Lake Timiskaming outlet down to the Montreal region). River conditions in tributaries of the Ottawa River, including the Abitibi-Timiskaming area, may differ.

For additional information, please communicate with the Ottawa River Regulation Secretariat using the 'Contact us' form on the website or leave a message at 819-303-5886 or 1-888-621-0059.

Ottawa River Regulating Committee