



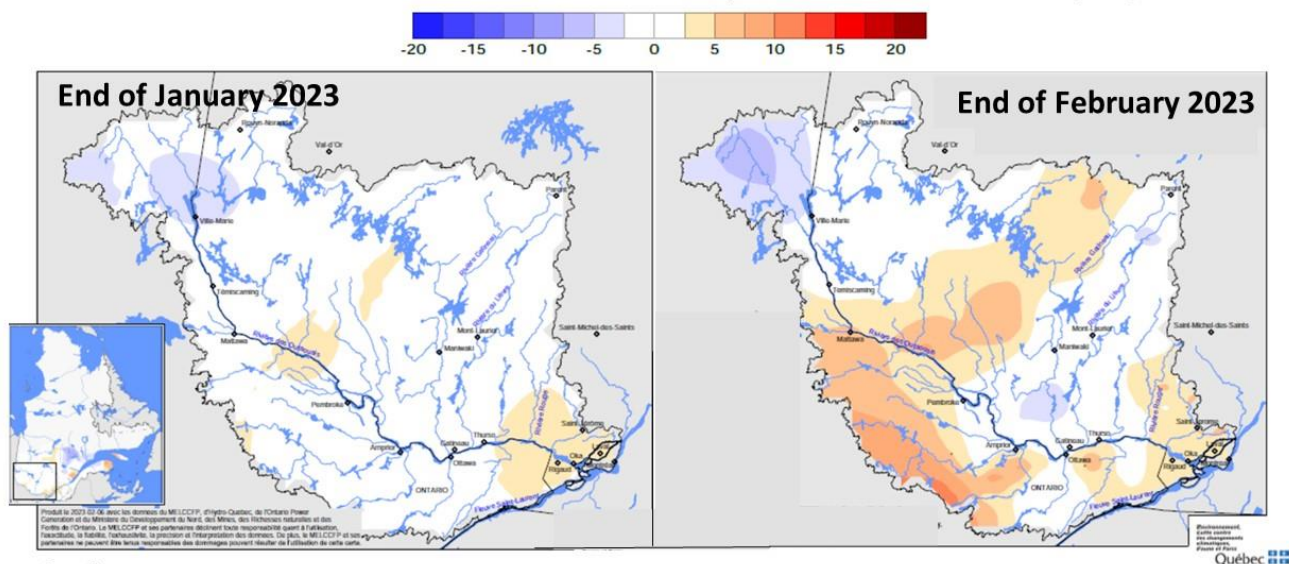
## Early Spring Conditions Overview in the Ottawa River Basin

**OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Thursday March 16, 2023** — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee monitors the Ottawa River basin closely in preparation for the spring freshet. Overall, this winter has been characterized by mild weather and above-average precipitation in several locations of the basin. With daytime temperatures slightly above zero over the last week, the snowpack has started melting slowly in the southern part of the basin. This Early Spring Conditions Overview is a summary of current conditions in the Ottawa River basin prior to the onset of the freshet. Sometime over the next few weeks, as flows and water levels begin to rise in the Ottawa River, the Regulating Committee will publish a Press Release announcing the onset of freshet.

### Current Snowpack Conditions:

- The snow cover has varied widely throughout the winter. Above normal precipitation was received in December and January over the southeastern and central parts of the basin. However, a period of mild weather in early January melted some of the snow cover in the southern part of the basin and resulted in a temporary rise in flows and water levels in some tributaries and in the lower Ottawa River. At the end of January (figure to the left below), the snow water content, or the quantity of water held in the snowpack, was close to normal in most locations.
- February brought above-average snowfall amounts and a second period of warm weather that caused a partial melt of the snow cover in the southeastern portion of the basin. At the end of February, the water content of the snow ranged from below-average to above-average as shown in the figure to the right below. Over the last two weeks, the water held in the snowpack stabilized in several areas.

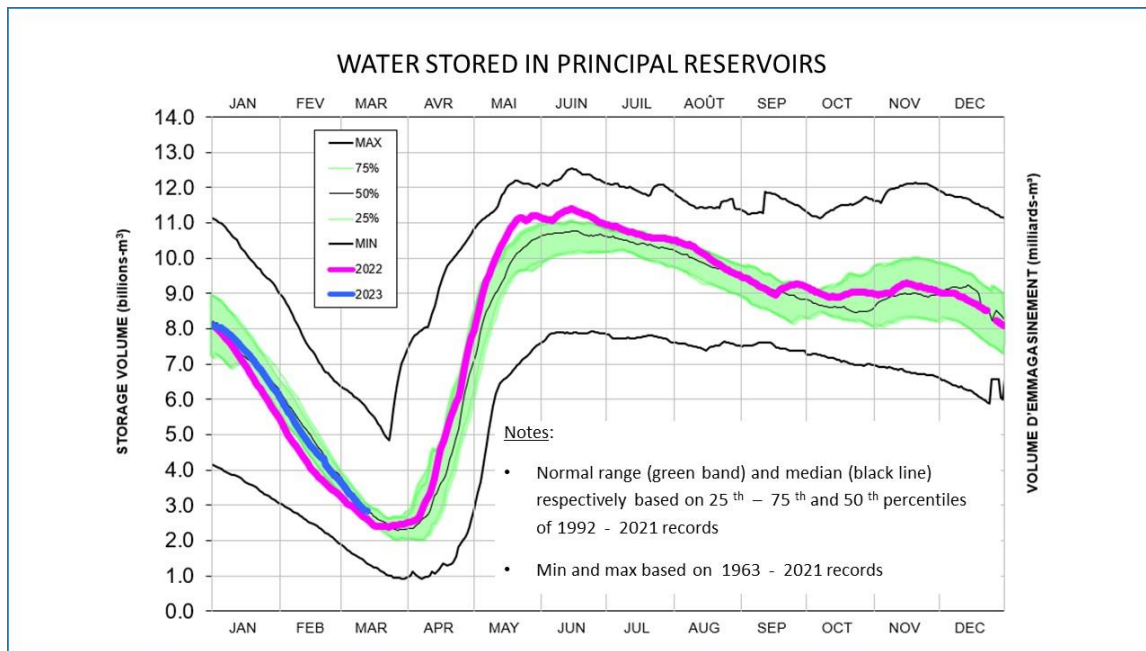
### SNOW WATER EQUIVALENT– Departure from normal (cm)



**Credit:** Environnement, Lutte contre les changements climatiques, Faune et Parcs, 2023. Data from the Réseau de surveillance du climat du Québec, Direction de la qualité de l'air et du climat, Québec.

**Reservoir Regulation Strategy / Current Level and Flow Conditions:**

- The principal reservoirs located in the northern part of the Ottawa River basin are essentially empty as shown in the figure below and are ready to retain spring runoff once the freshet begins in those upstream areas.
- The levels and flows on the main stem of the Ottawa River from Lake Timiskaming down to the Montreal area have been close to normal in most locations over the last few weeks. With seasonal temperatures and no significant rainfall in the short-term forecasts, water levels and flows on the main stem of the Ottawa River are expected to decrease slightly over the next few days. They should remain close to normal for this time of the year over the coming week, based on the current short-term weather forecast.



**Longer-term Overview:**

- As of March 15, the amount of water in the snowpack varies from below-average to above-average depending on locations. In tributaries where the snowpack is above normal, the spring freshet could bring above-normal runoff volume (assuming normal temperature and precipitation).
- It is too early to forecast peak river conditions, including the start of freshet or the magnitude of the peak on the main stem of the Ottawa River. At this time, there are no indicators of concern regarding possible major flooding. Additionally, the weather forecast calls for seasonal weather in the coming week that is conducive to a slow start to the freshet season.
- However, it is not possible to completely rule out the occurrence of a large spring freshet this early in the year. Many weather factors over the coming weeks and months (such as the speed of the melt and the possible occurrence of heavy rainfalls during the melt) will influence the strength of the freshet. Often, these weather factors only become certain a few days in advance.

The Ottawa River Regulating Committee will continue to monitor basin conditions and report conditions to residents on its website [ottawariver.ca](http://ottawariver.ca) .