



## RISING OTTAWA RIVER WATER LEVELS

**OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Wednesday March 19, 2025** — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee would like to inform watershed residents that levels and flows along the Ottawa River have begun increasing due to spring runoff. It cautions residents along the shores of the Ottawa River **from Mattawa down to the Montreal Region** that throughout the spring freshet period, which can span several weeks, water levels can rise rapidly at times and cause minor flooding in low-lying areas. Spring freshet is starting early this year due to recent warm temperatures combined with rain that initiated the melting of snow across the Ottawa River basin. At this time, weather forecasts call for the return of closer to normal temperatures and a moderate melt of the remaining snow cover. It is too early to predict the magnitude and timing of the peak in the main stem of the Ottawa River. The Regulating Committee will be closely monitoring the effects of precipitation and temperature increases throughout the spring freshet period as they may cause levels and flows to change rapidly. A second press release will be published if flood risks increase. **Refer to the [River Conditions Forecast](#) message at [www.ottawariver.ca](http://www.ottawariver.ca) for frequent updates on river conditions throughout the freshet.**

**River Conditions Forecast / Flooding Risk\*:** A large weather system from Colorado brought 10 to 20 mm of precipitation over much of the Ottawa River basin between March 15 (Saturday) and 17 (Monday), with amounts exceeding 25 mm in the Madawaska River sub-basin. This system also brought warm temperatures that triggered a rapid melting of snow in the southern portion of the Ottawa River basin and a moderate response in the central and northern portions. With increasing spring runoff flowing into the Ottawa River, the levels and flows started increasing slightly along the main stem of the Ottawa River downstream of Pembroke during the weekend. The return to sub-zero temperatures at night on Sunday and Monday moderated the spring melt. Although there is no significant precipitation forecasted over the next few days, above normal temperatures combined with some rain on March 19 and 21 is expected to lead to further snow melt across the basin. Spring runoff into the Ottawa River is thereby expected to continue increasing in most areas, causing levels to rise on the Ottawa River between Mattawa and the Montreal Region.

In mid-March, the amount of water in the snow cover was close to average throughout the watershed. A portion of the snow cover, over a large part of the basin, has melted over the last few days, with a higher portion in the southern part of the basin. The normal temperatures at this time of the year are conducive to a moderate melting of the snow cover, with average temperatures around zero (mostly positive during the day and negative at night). While there are no indicators of concern at this time, it is important to remember that spring water levels depend on several factors including the timing and amount of rainfall during the months of March, April and May. Weather conditions that bring a rapid melt of the snow or heavy rainfall events can only be known a few days in advance.

**Rising levels along the main stem of the Ottawa River could create possible flooding in low-lying areas over the coming weeks. Low-lying areas are those that are regularly flooded during the spring freshet period.**

**Reservoir Regulation Strategy:** Increases in water levels along the main stem of the Ottawa River in the spring are caused by increasing inflows (i.e. melt water and rain that is not absorbed by soils). In mid-March, the drawdown of the main reservoirs located in the northern part of the Ottawa River watershed was progressing normally. The recent melt event increased the spring runoff into some reservoirs and temporarily slowed down their drawdown. Spring runoff is expected to decrease with the return of closer to normal temperatures and reservoirs are expected to resume their drawdowns. During the freshet period, the principal storage reservoirs in the northern part of the watershed will store a large portion of runoff from this portion of the basin, thereby reducing flows in downstream areas. However, 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 at all times, with provincial agencies responsible for issuing flood-related messages. In Ontario, Conservation Authorities and District Offices of the Ministry of Natural Resources 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 collaborates with municipalities to protect residents. Monitoring of flood conditions can be viewed at <https://geoegl.msp.gouv.qc.ca/adnv2/>.

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### 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](http://www.ottawariver.ca) (English)

[www.rivieredesoutaouais.ca/](http://www.rivieredesoutaouais.ca/)(French)

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

**X / 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](https://twitter.com/ORRPB)(English)

[twitter.com/CPRRO](https://twitter.com/CPRRO)(French)

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**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, 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 another press release when it anticipates that river conditions on the main stem of the Ottawa River may exceed 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.*

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**Ottawa River Regulating Committee**