Fall Conditions Overview in the Ottawa River Basin

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Monday December 22, 2025 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee provides integrated management of the principal reservoirs in the Ottawa River basin throughout the year. Effective water management requires that the Committee continually monitors river conditions and forecasts the effects of weather conditions on water levels and flows at multiple locations throughout the basin. This report is a summary of fall conditions in the Ottawa River basin.

Total Precipitation July 1st to October 15, 2025 – Departure from normal (%)

Fall River Conditions: The dry conditions and lack of rainfall throughout most of the summer and fall has led to low water conditions throughout the Ottawa River watershed. As shown in the figure above, the watershed received precipitation amounts well below normal from July 1 to October 15, 2025, that is between 30 and 60 percent less rainfall than normal depending on the location. Although wetter conditions returned in late October and November, the rainfall was not enough to bring soil moisture and runoff back to normal conditions before temperatures dropped below freezing. With these dry conditions Lac Deschenes (Britannia) and Gatineau (Hull) levels reached the 7th lowest on record in the fall period and the 13th lowest at Pembroke.

Ranking of minimum fall levels along the Ottawa

Mattawa		
Start* : 1910		
Rank	Date	Level** (m)
1	1914.10.19	149.95
2	1911.10.24	150.21
3	1942.11.05	150.30
4	1944.10.02	150.31
5	1912.09.22	150.32
6	1921.09.28	150.38
7	1920.12.15	150.38
8	1916.10.14	150.41
9	1910.10.02	150.47
10	1922.12.07	150.47
58	**2025.11.30**	**152.06**

Pembroke		
Start* : 1913		
Rank	Date	Level** (m)
1	2005.09.06	110.76
2	1971.09.05	110.81
3	2010.09.02	110.82
4	2021.09.11	110.83
5	1987.10.02	110.84
6	1989.10.20	110.85
7	1955.10.11	110.85
8	2019.10.13	110.87
9	1998.10.15	110.88
10	1975.09.19	110.89
13	**2025.10.06**	**110.90**

Lake Deschenes at Britannia (Ottawa)		
Start* : 1916		
Rank	Date	Level** (m)
1	2005.09.25	57.44
2	1937.09.11	57.49
3	1987.09.18	57.50
4	1989.10.09	57.52
5	2011.09.27	57.53
6	2021.09.13	57.55
7	2025.10.13	57.56
8	2007.10.18	57.56
9	2010.09.07	57.56
10	1979.12.02	57.58
7	**2025.10.13**	**57.56**

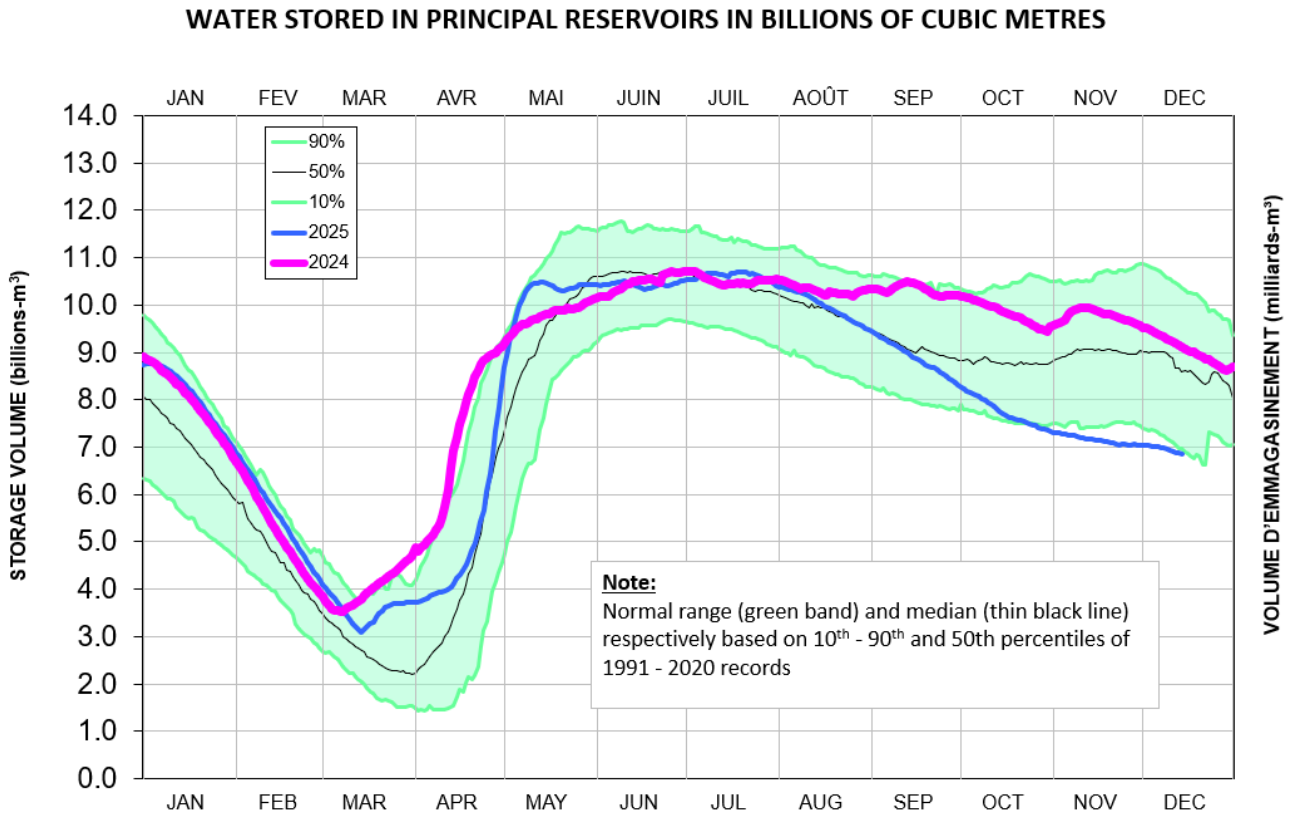
Gatineau (Hull)		
Start* : 1965		
Rank	Date	Level** (m)
1	1983.11.02	40.91
2	2019.10.18	40.94
3	2018.10.07	41.00
4	1975.09.04	41.00
5	1974.09.23	41.00
6	2016.11.22	41.01
7	2025.10.29	41.03
8	1981.09.26	41.03
9	1980.09.11	41.03
10	2004.11.05	41.04
7	**2025.10.29**	**41.03**

* Start of record period

**Daily level

Flow Regulation Strategy during a Fall with Low Flows: The management of water at the principal reservoirs during a fall low-flow event aims to balance preserving water levels in reservoirs to ensure sufficient flow over the winter while maintaining minimum levels along the river to provide for local municipal drinking water intakes and to ensure the water level is above the intakes prior to freeze-up. To provide sufficient flow along the river, the drawdown of the principal reservoirs began earlier than normal. As seen in the figure below, reservoir drawdown began in August and has now been drawn down below 10th percentile levels. Typically, as seen in the same figure, this drawdown does not begin until the winter months when water is released from reservoirs for hydropower production (to heat homes during the winter) and make room in the reservoirs for spring freshet.

Long-term Overview: Water levels in the principal reservoirs will continue to be lowered progressively during the winter period, as is done annually (refer to the figure below). Water levels in reservoirs are typically drawn down over a period of three to four months starting in December. The lowering of water levels in the principal reservoirs will allow for the storing of a portion of the runoff next spring to mitigate downstream flooding while ensuring the safe operations of facilities. It should be noted that the Des Joachims reservoir, the smallest of the group, is emptied over the course of a few weeks which typically happens in March. The water released from this reservoir only takes about three days to reach the watershed outlet near Carillon. The annual emptying of the principal reservoirs can be followed on the Planning Board's website under the Current Conditions - Reservoirs only tab.



During the winter months, when most precipitation accumulates on the ground as snow, water levels and flows in natural tributaries are generally decreasing. However, in the Ottawa River, flows and water levels are generally stable because of the continuous release of water from the principal reservoirs as they are gradually emptied. Still, river conditions can fluctuate when a winter thaw occurs or, more rarely, when extreme cold weather causes the thickening of the ice cover and/or the accumulation of frazil ice to restrict the river flow.

The Ottawa River Regulating Committee will continue to monitor basin conditions and report conditions to residents on its website www.ottawariver.ca/ .

Ottawa River Regulating Committee