

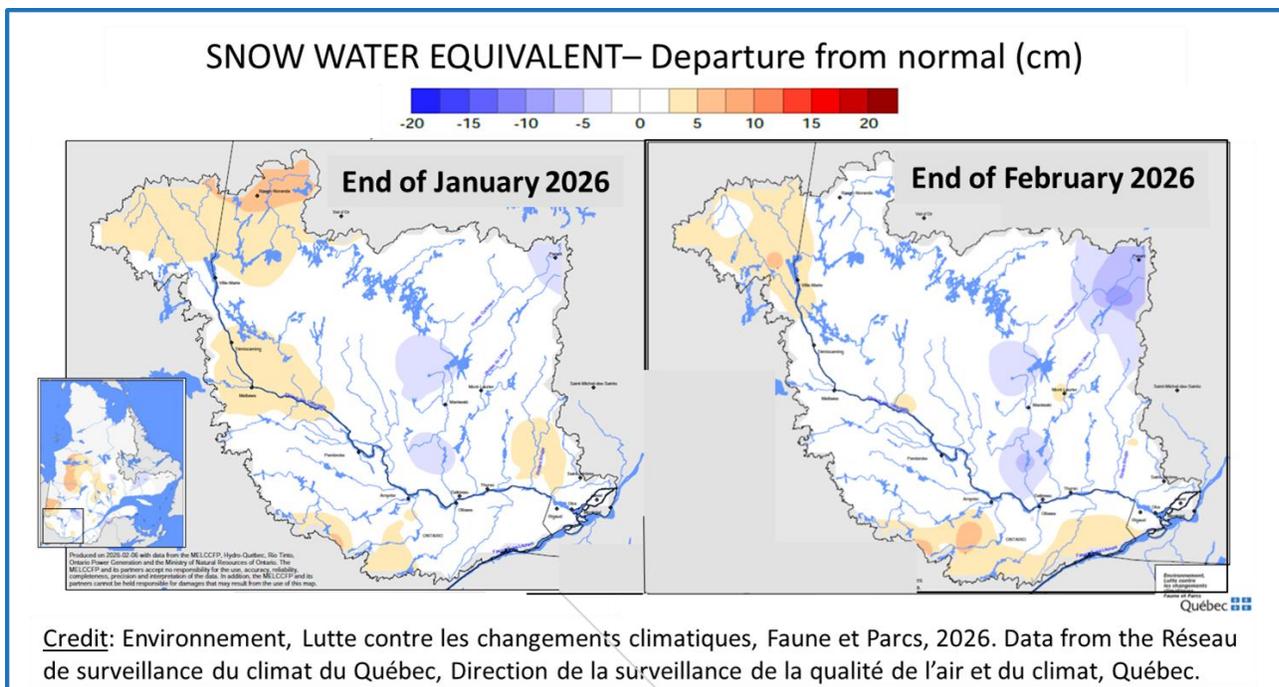


Early Spring Conditions Overview in the Ottawa River Basin

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Friday March 06, 2026 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee monitors the Ottawa River basin closely in preparation for the spring freshet. Overall, this winter has been characterized by temperatures close to seasonal values, although slightly colder than normal, and precipitation near average throughout most of the watershed. Water levels and flows have remained below average along the main stem of the Ottawa River due to low flow conditions that prevailed last year from mid-summer to late autumn. This Early Spring Conditions Overview is a summary of current conditions in the Ottawa River basin prior to the onset of the freshet.

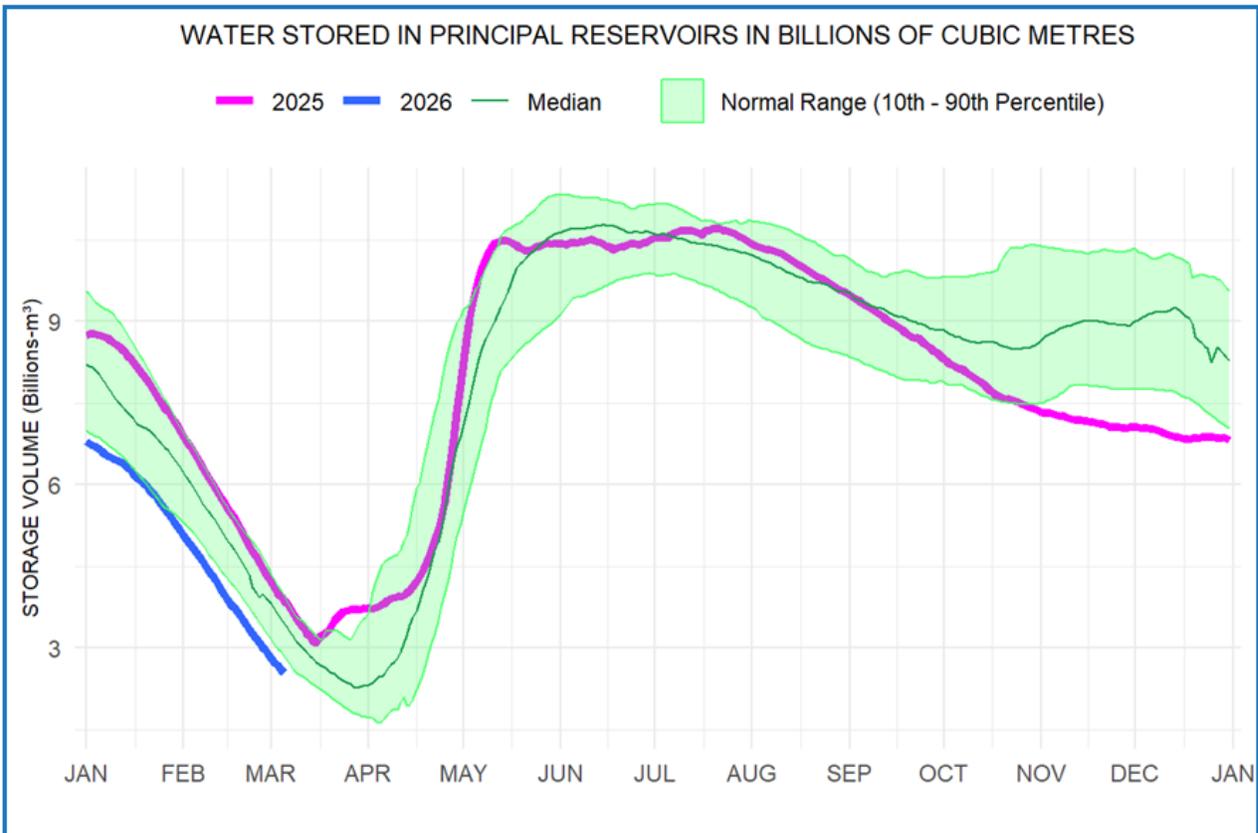
Current Snowpack Conditions:

- Snow cover began to form in early December. January was marked by temperatures close to seasonal norms, marked by cold spells, as well as a significant precipitation event early in the month. Overall, total precipitation for January remained close to normal across the watershed. As a result, the snow water equivalent, which is the quantity of water held in the snowpack, at the end of January was generally close to average across the basin, with values slightly above normal in the northwest and in the southern sub-basins, and slightly below normal in some areas of the centre (around Maniwaki) and northeast of the basin (figure below).
- At the end of February, the snow water equivalent was above normal in the southern sub-basins, with particularly high values in some areas, notably in parts of the Mississippi, Rideau and South Nation river basins. The northwestern part of the basin also showed above normal values. The central and northeastern parts of the basin showed values slightly below normal (figure below).



Reservoir Regulation Strategy / Current Level and Flow Conditions:

- Water levels and flows on the main stem of the Ottawa River, from Lake Temiskaming to the Montreal region, have remained below average in most locations since the beginning of winter, due to dry weather that prevailed across the basin from mid-summer to late autumn. The reservoir drawdown, which effectively began last summer to mitigate impacts of the low water conditions, continued into winter to maintain flows near seasonal norms.
- By early March, the drawdown of the main reservoirs located in the northern part of the Ottawa River watershed is progressing normally, and is slightly ahead of schedule, as shown in the figure below. The water stored in the principal reservoirs is tracking near the lower bound of the normal range (10th percentile), or slightly below in some locations. This operation will continue generally over the coming weeks to ensure adequate storage capacity in anticipation of the onset of the spring freshet.



Longer-term Overview:

- As of March 6, the amount of water in the snow cover is close to average throughout the watershed, with values above normal in the southern and northwestern sub-basins. Temperatures above zero accompanied by rain are expected over the coming days across much of the basin, which could trigger an early onset of the spring freshet, particularly in the tributaries of the southern part of the basin, such as the Madawaska, Mississippi,

Rideau and South Nation rivers. However, the effect of this thaw on the main stem of the Ottawa River remains uncertain at this stage.

- It is too early to predict the magnitude and timing of the peak in the main stem of the Ottawa River. Should mild temperatures persist and significant precipitation occur over the coming weeks, an early onset of the spring freshet cannot be excluded. Weather conditions in the coming weeks, such as snowfall and heavy rain, will influence the intensity of the freshet and are often known only a few days before they occur.

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

Ottawa River Regulating Committee