



RISING OTTAWA RIVER WATER LEVELS

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Thursday April 2, 2026 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee would like to inform basin residents that levels and flows along the Ottawa River are expected to begin increasing over the next few days due to onset of the spring freshet in the Ottawa River basin. 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. The levels and flows in the Ottawa River are currently close to normal but are expected to start rising sometime Friday or into the weekend depending on locations. Recent rain and mild temperatures have increased snowmelt especially in the southern and central parts of the basin. With additional rainfall events forecast over the coming days, spring runoff is expected to continue increasing. It is too early to predict the magnitude and timing of the freshet 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 for frequent updates on river conditions throughout the freshet.**

River Conditions Forecast / Flooding Risk*:

In mid-March, the amount of water held in the snow cover, or snow water equivalent, was close to average in the central part of the basin, with above-normal amounts in the northwest sub-basins and below-normal amounts in the eastern and southern sub-basins. Since mid-March, above-normal precipitation has been recorded across the basin, further increasing snowpack volumes particularly in the north. The central and southern parts of the basin now carry near-average to slightly above-average snow water equivalent, with the exception of the southeastern sub-basins, notably the Rideau and South Nation sub-basins, where the snowpack has been largely depleted by melt episodes occurring as early as the first week of March.

Over the past week, a return to near-seasonal temperatures has initiated snowmelt across the Ottawa River basin, with daytime temperatures above 0°C in the southern and central parts of the Ottawa River basin and temperatures at or near freezing overnight. This has resulted in a slow but continuous increase in spring runoff across most of the basin. Precipitation received across the basin on March 30 and 31 – predominantly rain in the southern and central parts and a mix of rain and snow in the northern part – has further increased runoff. With additional precipitation events forecast over the coming days, a total of 50 to 70 mm could be received over a five-day period depending on location.

Spring runoff into the Ottawa River is expected to increase significantly in most areas, causing levels and flows to rise along the main stem of the Ottawa River between Mattawa and the Montreal Region. While the snow water content of the snowpack in the northwestern portion of the basin is above normal for this time of year, snow water content is only one of several factors impacting the magnitude of the spring freshet. The freshet magnitude will largely depend on weather conditions including the timing and amount of precipitation over the coming weeks. Weather conditions that trigger rapid snowmelt or heavy rainfall 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). At this time, principal reservoirs have essentially completed their normal drawdown. **It is important to note that the drawdown and refill timing of each principal reservoir is influenced by local conditions that vary across the basin. Members of the Regulating Committee are coordinating their efforts within the framework of integrated water management to reduce flood impacts on downstream communities as much as possible.**

During the freshet period, the principal reservoirs in the northern part of the basin 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 parts 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/page/floods>. 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/> .

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.

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.

x.com/ORRPB (English)

x.com/CPRRO (French)

About the Ottawa River Regulating Committee: The group consists of the following agencies that are responsible for the integrated flow management of the principal reservoirs within the Ottawa River basin: 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.

Ottawa River Regulating Committee