

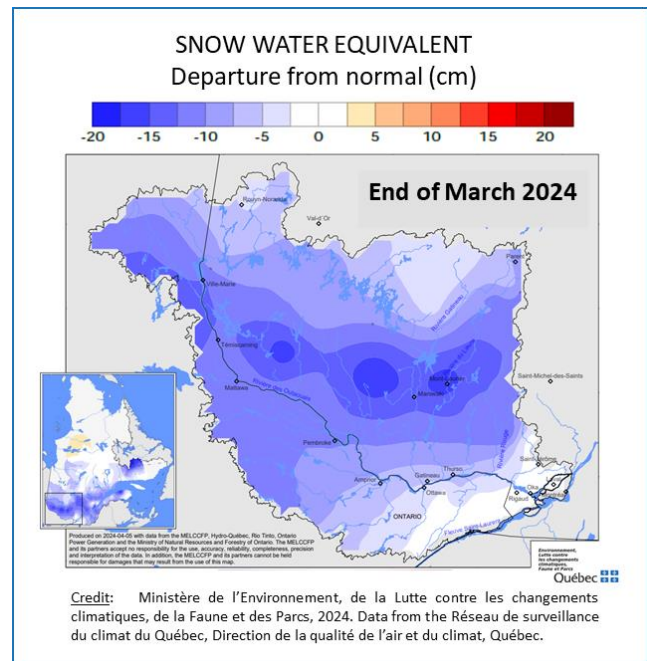


RISING OTTAWA RIVER WATER LEVELS

OTTAWA/GATINEAU, Sunday April 14, 2024 — The Ottawa River Regulating Committee would like to inform watershed residents that levels and flows along the Ottawa River have begun increasing due to increasing 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 water levels can rise rapidly at times and cause minor flooding in low-lying areas. Spring started early this year and the snow cover has slowly melted away from the central and southern parts of the basin over the last few weeks. However, heavy rainfall events in parts of the watershed may cause levels and flows to change rapidly in downstream river reaches and the Regulating Committee will be closely monitoring the effects of precipitation over the next few weeks. Further bulletins 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*: A large weather system from Texas brought 15 to 75 mm of precipitation over much of the Ottawa River basin between April 11 and 13, with the highest amounts received in the Timiskaming area. This system brought considerable warmth that quickly melted the remaining snow upstream of Lake Timiskaming, which added up to 60 mm of water in some areas. No significant precipitation is forecast over the next few days. With normal daytime temperatures now above zero, runoff from recent precipitation is combining with the remaining snowmelt in the northern portion of the basin. Spring runoff into the Ottawa River is thereby increasing, causing levels to rise on the Ottawa River between Mattawa and the Montreal Region.

Although March brought close to average precipitation amounts, part of it fell as rain and the snow cover that remained in the upland areas and the northern part of the watershed continued to melt slowly with daytime temperatures above zero. As seen in the figure, the snow water content (that is the amount of water held in the snow cover) at the end of March and early April was significantly below normal everywhere, with snow water equivalent varying between 40 and 120 mm in the central and northern parts of the basin respectively. While the absence of snow in a large portion of the basin reduces the risk of significant flooding, it is important to remember that spring water levels depend also on the timing and amount of rainfall during the months of April and May. Weather conditions that bring 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 March, reservoirs had begun an early but cautious re-fill as the snowpack was well-below average while maintaining sufficient storage volume in the event of significant spring rainfall. With the latest weather event, 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 and Forestry 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/>.

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.

twitter.com/ORRPB (English)

twitter.com/CPRRO (French)

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 and Forestry, 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 other press releases, as needed, when it anticipates that river conditions on the main stem of the Ottawa River may exceed significant 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