

Flood preparedness

Dear editor:

This has been a particularly cold winter with significant snowfall in many parts of the province. With the official arrival of spring and warming temperatures, the risk of flooding increases. I would like to let you know how my ministry responds to flooding and how ministry staff can help during flood season.

The Ministry of Natural Resources is responsible for flood forecasting and warning at the provincial level in Ontario. We work closely with the province's 36 conservation authorities and Environment Canada to forecast when and where flooding is likely to occur.

The ministry and conservation authorities monitor watershed and weather conditions to predict water levels and flows, and issue flood messages. Flood messages help municipalities notify the public of developing unsafe river and lake conditions and advise them to take precautions.

In areas where conservation authorities do not exist, MNR District offices provide flood information to local municipalities and the media. Local governments are then responsible for communicating messages to the public and for first-line emergency response.

The ministry's Surface Water Monitoring Centre monitors flood conditions 24 hours a day, seven days a week and is able to contact MNR District Offices and conservation authorities immediately with updates. When the risk of flooding is high, the Surface Water Monitoring Centre issues flood messages to the appropriate conservation authorities and MNR District offices by email, fax and, if after hours, by phone. This information is also shared with partners and key stakeholders, such as Ontario Power Generation, CN-CP Rail, the Ministry of Transportation, the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management, and isolated First Nation communities.

The ministry's Emergency Management network is also activated when required. The ministry has regular daily contact with the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management about current conditions and flood potential.

To see the ministry's current flood messages, go to www.ontario.ca/flooding

The ministry is making every effort to keep the people of Ontario informed, to provide reliable and immediate updates and to limit the effects of flooding as much as possible.

David Oraziotti

Minister of Natural

Resources