

Ready, set, rain! Urban flood resilience in Ontario

Urban flooding¹ is impacting our province's economy, environment, and the health and wellbeing of its citizens. Each year more communities, residents, and businesses are affected². Beyond those who have already experienced flooding, millions of people are at high risk³.

There is limited support for addressing urban flooding, and municipalities, residents, and businesses are largely left to their own devices to address risk and clean up after flooding occurs⁴.

We believe that there is a need for coordinated action to address the problem of urban flooding, by all levels of government, the private sector, nonprofits, academia, and individual citizens.

We support a vision of flood-resilient Ontario communities, in which:

- Urban flood risk is assessed, mapped, and communicated to the public, and highest risk areas are **prioritized** for improvements;
- The public **prepares** for flooding, minimizing risk where possible, and minimizing downstream impacts, while getting ready for emergencies;
- Natural infrastructure is **protected and restored**, runoff is minimized, and;
- Infrastructure is maintained and **improved** so that all properties are protected as much as possible from large storm events.

We support investment in projects which will bring more Ontario communities closer to this vision of flood resilience. Some areas of focus are:

- Mapping urban flood risk and communicating it to the public;
- Neighbourhood-based resilience;
- Retrofitting neighbourhoods for flood resilience using grey/green and public/private approaches;
- Assessing the barriers and opportunities for green infrastructure;
- Educating children about flood preparedness;
- Training and preparing service providers in flood resilience;
- Exploring innovative strategies for promoting flood resilience measures on private property.

¹ Defined as sewer backup from storm or sanitary sewers, overland flooding away from waterbodies, and sewer overflows.

² Impacts include damage to private property and public infrastructure, disruption to transportation systems, missed work and business interruptions, mental and physical health impacts, compromised living situations, financial strain and damage to waterbodies and ecosystems. For more on causes and impacts of urban flooding, see [Urban Flooding in Ontario: Toward collective impact solutions](#).

³ Nearly half of Ontario's residential housing stock was built before 1983, before flood control and stormwater management were standard in infrastructure designs. See [Statistics Canada](#). Climate change is projected to increase the intensity and frequency of precipitation events. See York University [Ontario Climate Change Projections](#).

⁴ Focus has been placed on riverine flooding by provincial and federal governments. Federal measures like the [floodplain mapping guidance series](#), and provincial measures like the [Flood Forecasting and Warning Program](#), along with much of the work done by Conservation Authorities, address the risks associated with riverine and lake flooding.