



Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative Municipal Adaptation and Resiliency Service (MARS)

Extreme Weather Event Fact Sheet

Event : Flood

Location : Wawa, Ontario

Date : October 2012

RECENT EXTREME WEATHER EVENT

Wawa, a northern Ontario community with a population of 3,000, experienced a severe rain storm on October 25th 2012. The rainfall was accompanied by thunder, lightning and high winds. Late on the 25th, the municipality of Wawa declared a state of emergency. In total, the town received 101.6 mm (4 in) of rain during the October 25th storm. The average amount of rainfall for the entire month of October from 1971 to 2003 in Wawa was 110.5 mm (4.3 in).

IMPACTS OF EXTREME WEATHER EVENT

Critical Infrastructure: Two main highways that provided access to and from the municipality as well as the Michipicoten First Nation reserve suffered severe damage, leaving the municipality cut off from access to the outside world between October 25th and the end of the day on October 26th. Highway 17 and a major communication cable remained severed for a full week while repairs north of Wawa were completed. The storm also caused severe damage to municipal roadbeds and a popular biking and snowmobiling trail. Three bridges and one culvert in the municipality were also completely destroyed as a result of the event. Flooding also knocked out telephone service to approximately 1,000 Bell Canada customers in nearby communities and many people within the town experienced power outages.

Economic Cost of Weather Event: The estimated cost of storm related damage in Wawa exceeds \$3.5 million. The Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) will cover much of these costs. However, total costs resulting from sewer line and storm water damage are still unknown.



Public and private property: The intensive rain re-routed rivers from their natural paths and formed new riverbeds. One such riverbed formation was along the Michipicoten Harbor, where two homes along the shoreline are now uninhabitable. Michipicoten Bay and the shoreline remains littered with debris washed into Lake Superior which needs to be cleaned up by the appropriate government body. The town's only hospital, the Lady Dunn Health Centre, also experienced flooding.



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WHAT CHANGES IN CLIMATE CAN WAWA EXPECT?

As a result of climate change northern Ontario is expected to experience an increase in annual temperatures, resulting in shorter winter seasons, shorter ice cover and snow period, and less reliable snow conditions caused by winter rainfall. As well, climate change is expected to increase the occurrence of severe weather events in northern Ontario.

MUNICIPAL RESPONSE AND LESSONS LEARNED

A community can never be fully prepared for such an event but Wawa was prepared by having in place a well-developed and practiced emergency plan. This helped to ensure the safety of the community members and provide emergency assistance to the neighbouring Michipicoten First Nation Community.

Culverts were replaced with larger units and added in new locations during reconstruction efforts following October's major flooding. Measures such as these have ensured that more recent flooding in Wawa does not have such devastating impacts.



For more information on MARS, visit <http://www.glsicities.org/MARS.cfm> or contact Nicola Crawhall, at nicola.crawhall@rogers.com.
Photos: Canadian Underwriter (p.1), Soo Today (p.2)
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