

**Ministry of Community Safety and
Correctional Services**

Office of the Fire Marshal and
Emergency Management

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**Ministère de la Sécurité communautaire
et des Services correctionnels**

Bureau du commissaire des incendies
et de la gestion des situations d'urgence

25, avenue Morton Shulman
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March 28th, 2019

Dear mayor or head of council,

Now that spring is upon us, the Province of Ontario will soon be engaged in providing emergency response assistance to First Nations Communities located in the Province through an agreement with the Government of Canada. The Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM), in partnership with other provincial ministries and federal departments, coordinates planning for and evacuation of First Nations communities when they are at risk due to flooding or forest fires.

As you may be aware, when the annual spring ice breakup begins on the river systems that empty into James Bay, the First Nations communities located on those river systems are at high risk of flooding and there is an identified need for 'Host Communities' to accommodate evacuees. Contingency planning is currently underway for the following James Bay communities, Kashechewan, Moose Cree, Fort Albany and Attawapiskat First Nations. There are approximately 6000 First Nations members across these James Bay communities.

The most recent threat assessment indicates that current snowpack, ice on rivers and anticipated temperature fluctuations with transition to spring is expected to result in a higher than normal downstream flow to these communities, putting them at higher risk of flooding and evacuation. The worst-case scenario would see more than one community trying to evacuate concurrently, which will overwhelm our existing host capacity of approximately 2200 beds.

The OFMEM is asking if your municipality would consider being a 'Host Community' for the 2019 James Bay flood season. The following questions are provided to assist you in your deliberations:

1. Could your Region/Municipality host evacuated residents?
2. Could your Region/Municipality host elders, families with young children, people with illnesses or disabilities, pregnant mothers in hotel/motel/dormitory-type accommodations?
3. Could your Region/Municipality host displaced community members in arena-type accommodations?
4. How soon could your municipality begin to accept evacuees (do you have any ongoing or near-future events which will decrease hotel or arena capacity – i.e. tournaments, garden shows, etc.)?
5. How much lead time would your municipality require to set-up for evacuees?
6. How long could your municipality host evacuees for?

7. What provincial and/or federal supports would your municipality require (OFMEM Field Officers and / or Liaison Officers from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)?
8. What other supports would you foresee requiring (Canadian Red Cross, Salvation Army, other non-governmental organizations)?

OFMEM works closely with provincial and federal stakeholders to ensure a host community receives the appropriate funding and supports to safely accommodate displaced First Nation community members.

If you require further information about evacuations and becoming a host community, please do not hesitate to contact Aileen Cassells, Deputy Chief, Emergency Operations (647-329-1135, Aileen.Cassells@ontario.ca) or Jason Redlarski, Program Manager, Provincial Emergency Operations (647-329-1194, Jason.Redlarski@ontario.ca).

Regards,



Jon Pegg
Assistant Deputy Minister
Fire Marshal and Chief of Emergency Management

- cc. Community Emergency Management Coordinator
Chief Administrative Officer
Clerk
OFMEM Field Officer
Aileen Cassells, Deputy Chief, Emergency Management Operations
Jason Redlarski, Program Manager, Provincial Emergency Operations Unit