

Newest Manitoba flood victims face months from homes

Communities along south end of Lake Manitoba hard hit

[CBC News](#)

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Hundreds of residents evacuated after vicious winds and floodwaters battered communities along the south end of Lake Manitoba might not get back into their properties for months.

Residents of those areas, in the Rural Municipality of St. Laurent, were given the bad news at a public meeting Wednesday morning.

"It's tough news for people who have been waiting here at the RM office all morning, waiting to find out when they can go home," said CBC reporter Megan Benedictson.

Numerous properties in Twin Lakes Beach, Laurentian Beach and Sandpiper Beach are believed to have been pounded by the storm Tuesday evening.

Wind-whipped waves were shoved inland where they washed out roads, spilled over dikes and flooded into homes and cottages, forcing the evacuation of 700 residences in a few hours.



Floodwaters blown in from the swollen Lake Manitoba have surrounded homes and cottages in the RM of St. Laurent. Valerie-Micaela Bain/CBC

Earl Zotter, the reeve of the Rural Municipality of St. Laurent, said he was surprised at the severity of the flooding. He said he didn't expect to see the lake rise so quickly and so soon.

"Maybe I was optimistic but I had really hoped that we wouldn't have seen this at all, But we're not so lucky and now I think this is going to be a sign of the the times for the rest of the summer."

Zotter said no one can go back to their property unless it is to retrieve vital medical equipment or supplies of that nature.

In the next couple of days, other people will be allowed to go back and get valuables but they'll have to register to go in and they won't be allowed to stay, even if their home managed to stay high and dry.

That's because the infrastructure is just too damaged and because there are still two weeks left until the lake, already at historically high levels, is expected to reach its peak.

Stormy meeting

Tempers flared in Langruth on Wednesday afternoon at a public meeting concerning Lake Manitoba flooding.

Hundreds of people who live and farm in the region turned out, many of them offering stories of the devastation caused by floodwaters from Tuesday's storm.

One farmer said he has lost more than a thousand acres to the lake.

And many at the meeting blamed the province for [artificial flooding](#), saying they had been made sacrificial lambs.

Lake Manitoba is being fed by floodwaters from the Assiniboine River, channeled through the [Portage Diversion](#).

As a result, the water levels on the lake will remain high for months, so the risk that this could happen again is just too great, Zotter said.

Plus, the protection that was in place prior to Tuesday's storm has been battered, so next time the water could come in even more suddenly.

Tour of destruction

Zotter tried to tour the region Wednesday morning but was prevented from getting to some areas because of deep water and debris floating around.

"A lot of household appliances have moved. Outbuildings are off their footings or pushed away," he said.

"We saw that there were places that we wouldn't go — that were still under water — that were still inundated. We had to turn around at a number of different locations because it wasn't safe to go through."

Benedictson was taken through parts of the region by RCMP on Wednesday and described seeing "everything from lumber to televisions to furniture" floating on the water.



Debris litters the ground at Twin Lakes Beach on Wednesday as flood waters begin to recede. Sheila North-Wilson

Several mature trees have been toppled over and outbuildings left crumpled and overturned, she said.

The water levels have receded somewhat but are still covering a vast amount of land.

"I know people are going to want to see their places but we do not want anyone going back in until we can ascertain that our roads are safe. We don't want to have to rescue more people," said deputy Reeve Mona Sedleski.

She said the water came right up to Highway 6, which is usually more than a kilometre from the lake.

Rescue mission

Nearly 90 people from the region had to be rescued by crews using front-end loaders and Zodiac boats. Helicopters were also used but their efforts were hampered by the gusting winds.

It was a shock for those who had to get out quickly, caught off guard when the lake roared up.

"I've got three freezers, full of meat, [and I] couldn't even save a hamburger because it was too sudden. I just never dreamed that this would happen — not like this," said Helen Quinn, who was rescued from her Twin Lakes Beach property by a loader.

She managed to grab two bags of groceries and get her two dogs out, but that was it.

Quinn thought she was protected because there is — or was — a brick wall in front of her property.

"I thought I was safe but the wind came up and a wall that I have made out of brick, solid as hell, came right down."

Sedleski, who had to flee her home, some 60 metres from the lake at Laurentian Beach, is thankful there were no injuries in the chaos.

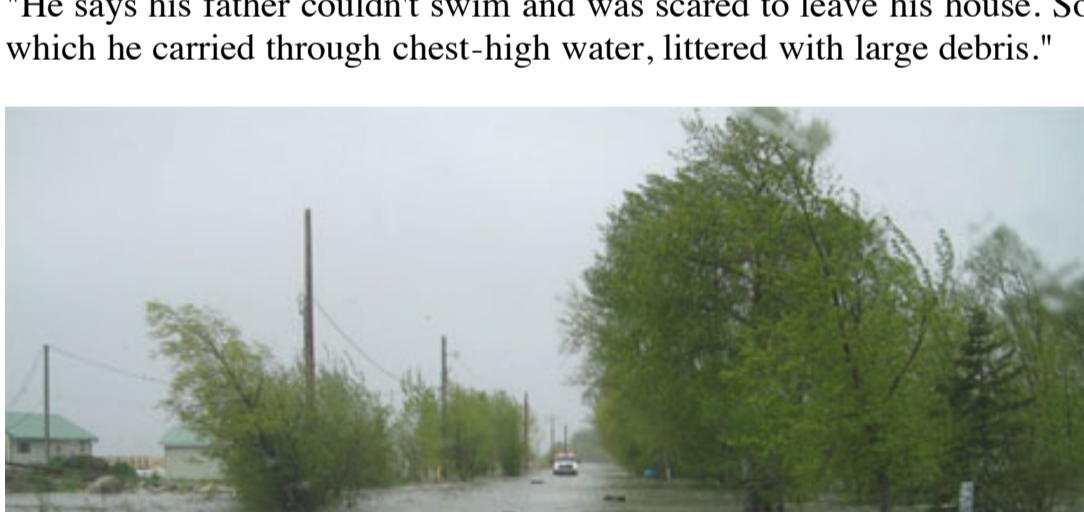
She quickly surveyed the damage before she left and said the scene was unbelievable.

"It's really quite devastating to see your property just disappear in front of your eyes," she said.

"It's going to be major devastation. Absolutely major. There were sheds all the way back onto the road — there was no berm left as far as they could see."

While there were no injuries, there were scary moments, according to Benedictson, who spoke with a man who had to rescue his father.

"He says his father couldn't swim and was scared to leave his house. So he waded in for the rescue, grabbed his father and his dog, which he carried through chest-high water, littered with large debris."



An emergency vehicle makes it way through gusting winds and flooded roads on Tuesday. Valerie-Micaela Bain/CBC

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David James

2011/06/01 at 6:36 PM ET

The only option I'd suggest is these affected cottagers remember to NOT vote for the Dippers this coming October. Otherwise it just going to be more of the same.

Rating: -14

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italia

2011/06/01 at 6:03 PM ET

My cottage is located on Lake Manitoba and built well within the r.m.'s codes.

I am not sure what the province and R.M. knew prior to this disaster but what I can tell you is that members of this community pulled together and did the best they could for themselves and to help their fellow neighbours. No military help came when we could have used it to build dikes or make sandbags.

No one could have predicted this but I wish the water from Portage had not been dumped into the lake without a mechanism to bring water levels down.

My many thanks to those who tried to help us and to those who helped feed the volunteers.

Rating: 31

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kirandrews

2011/06/01 at 5:42 PM ET

We are cottagers and my parents are year-round residents at Twin Beaches. The province has been in our family for close to 80 years. This water is unprecedented and not a natural occurrence. Mother Nature is not responsible for this one. It's one thing to lose physical property (ie. structures, furniture, belongings) but I fear that we will actually have lost our land. The beach has already been washed out into the lake and no one knows what to expect now. My parents built their retirement home there. Not in an "unsafe zone" and not without understanding of what living beachfront entails. In some ways we are luckier than others as the frontage to our lot was deep and my father is a water resources expert himself with 30 years of experience with the Province and another 20 as a consultant. It is infuriating to hear individuals make comments about something they know nothing about. I wish people would educate themselves before offering their two cents. And PS: it's Laurentia Beach - without the "n".

Rating: 26

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Stalag13

2011/06/01 at 5:34 PM ET

Province of whiners..you build near the lake, cottages or homes, you can expect this sort of thing...here we expect the government to wipe our noses for us...other parts of the world if they get a flood ten times worse than this little event, they are happy if them and their families are all alive..never mind furniture and houses..here all we do is whine and complain..

Rating: -46

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SOUTHEASTERN GUY

2011/06/01 at 4:18 PM ET

This is what happens when you the government hires a unknown water resorses management person who is from outside of Manitoba, time too fire both ALF Warkentines seccesor and Struthers , how can a guy from Africa tell the government what happens with no experience of Manitoba conditions, more so poor planing of government officials right from the TOP

Rating
1

17 16

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