



ODRAP

Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program

**Ontario Disaster Relief
Assistance Program
Program Guidelines**

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Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) Provincial Guidelines

1. PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM

The Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP) is intended to assist those whose essential property has been extensively damaged as a result of a sudden, unexpected natural disaster such as a severe windstorm, tornado or flood. ODRAP contains:

- Private component: Individuals, homeowners, farmers, small business enterprises and non-profit organizations. Funds are raised by the community and may be matched up to 2:1 by the province;
- Public component: Financial assistance may be provided by the province to affected municipalities for disaster response and recovery.

The program provides financial assistance within the declared disaster area to restore damaged public infrastructure and/or private property to pre-disaster condition, when the cost of restoration exceeds the financial capacity of the affected individuals, municipality and community at large.

Private Insurance

ODRAP is not a substitute for adequate insurance coverage and does not provide full cost recovery.

Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act

For a municipality to be eligible for ODRAP, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing (herein referred to as “the Minister”) must make a declaration of a disaster area for the purposes of ODRAP. Municipalities are not automatically entitled to receive financial assistance when declaring a local “emergency” under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act (EMCPA). An “emergency” declared by the head of council under the EMPCA is separate and distinct from the declaration of a “disaster area” made by the Minister for the purposes of ODRAP.

2. INTENT OF THE GUIDELINES

The intent of these Guidelines is to provide information about ODRAP to assist an affected municipality to determine whether it should request the Minister to declare a disaster area for the purpose of accessing provincial disaster assistance. The regional Municipal Services Office in the area can provide additional information. Contact information for Municipal Services Offices is in Appendix A: Disaster Checklist for Municipal Council.

3. ROLE OF THE MINISTRY OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS AND HOUSING

ODRAP is administered through the regional Municipal Services Offices and coordinated through the Municipal Programs and Education Branch of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). The Municipal Services Offices carry out the following:

- Provide information to municipalities on making a disaster declaration request to the Minister, and completing the Municipal Disaster Information Report, as described in Appendix B;
- Inform municipalities on the purpose of ODRAP, eligible public and private damages, and types of financial assistance;
- Provide the Minister with information about the disaster, its impact on the community and the appropriateness of disaster relief assistance;
- Administer the legal agreement with the municipality and other documentation;
- Advise municipalities on setting up a disaster relief committee for private damages and establishing operating procedures;
- Attend the inaugural meeting of the disaster relief committee and provide appropriate support;
- Distribute program guidelines and related materials issued by the Ministry to the disaster relief committee.

4. HOW ODRAP WORKS

Making a request for a disaster declaration for public and private assistance

The Minister is authorized to declare a “disaster area” for the purposes of ODRAP.

To make a request, municipal council must adopt a resolution and forward it to the Minister within 14 working days of the onset of the disaster. The resolution must:

- State the type of natural disaster and date of the event;
- Outline the municipality’s request for a disaster area for the **public and/or private components** of ODRAP;
- Define clearly all areas damaged by the disaster, and whether all or a specified portion of the municipality is to be declared a disaster area. Municipal boundaries may not coincide with the areas damaged by the disaster. In this regard, municipalities should try to define all areas damaged by the disaster to ensure fair treatment to all affected residents. It is important to note that only uninsured damages within the declared disaster area are eligible for ODRAP funding;
- Agree to establish a local disaster relief committee for the private component of ODRAP as soon as possible once the declaration of a disaster area is made by the Minister.

Sample Resolution Requesting a Disaster Declaration for the Public and Private Assistance of ODRAP

Whereas the municipality of (name) recently experienced a (describe type of natural disaster event) on (date) and has experienced substantial damage to municipal property and infrastructure and has received reported losses of private damage, the council of (name of the municipality) hereby requests the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to declare the (specific area/municipality) a “disaster area” for the purposes of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program (ODRAP);

Further, should the Minister declare a disaster area regarding the private component of ODRAP, Council will immediately, under the authority of ODRAP, appoint members to a disaster relief committee to administer ODRAP.

Making a request for a disaster declaration for public assistance when more than one municipality is impacted

If two or more municipalities have been affected by the same natural disaster and wish to access the public component of ODRAP, the council of each municipality affected by the event must adopt a council resolution requesting a declaration of a disaster area. The Minister may declare one disaster area to cover all the affected municipalities.

Making a request for a disaster declaration for private assistance only

If two or more municipalities have been affected by the same disaster, the council of each municipality affected by the disaster must adopt a council resolution requesting the disaster area declaration. The Minister may decide to declare one disaster area to cover all of the affected communities for the purposes of one disaster relief committee administering the private component fairly and equitably.

Upper tier municipalities, i.e. counties, regions or the District Municipality of Muskoka, may adopt a resolution requesting a disaster declaration and agree to appoint a disaster relief committee. In this situation, local council resolutions of those municipalities affected by the disaster must accompany the upper tier's resolution.

Making a request for a disaster declaration from unincorporated areas

While unincorporated areas are excluded from the 14 working days requirement, a request for declaration of a disaster area for private assistance only may be made to the Minister by a local service provider, e.g. local services board, local roads board, local school board, within a reasonable timeframe, ideally, as soon as possible following the disaster event. The MAH Municipal Services Office can provide more information regarding this process.

Approving a disaster declaration

In evaluating a request for declaring a disaster area, the Minister considers both the cause and the extent of the damage relative to the financial resources of the affected municipality and the community at large.

Depending on the magnitude of a natural disaster, a Provincial Disaster Assessment Team (PDAT) may be activated to provide the province's own assessment of the scale of the disaster impacts and the need for financial assistance to the Minister.

The municipality requesting the declaration of a disaster area will be notified by the Minister of the decision. When a disaster area is declared, a legal agreement is established between the Minister and affected municipality for accountability purposes.

Maintaining verification and audit controls

When disaster financial assistance is approved, the affected municipality must submit claim forms, accompanied by appropriate receipts, in order to recover its costs. A senior municipal official is required to sign all claims, verifying expenditures. The forms are provided by the regional Municipal Services Office, which provides advice on their completion and audit controls.

5. PROVINCIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE - PUBLIC DAMAGE COMPONENT

The public component of ODRAP provides assistance to municipalities when damage is so extensive that it exceeds the capacity of the affected municipality to manage.

The Minister considers the impact of, and financial hardship caused by the natural disaster on the affected municipality. Municipalities within the declared disaster area may receive repayment/reimbursement of up to 100 per cent of eligible costs for uninsured municipal damage associated with a disaster.

Submitting a municipal disaster information report

In addition to the municipal council resolution, the affected municipality must submit a municipal disaster information report (see Appendix B) containing at least a preliminary estimate of public damage losses within 14 working days from the date of the disaster. However, for disasters with significant public safety consequences, the municipal council resolution and the municipal disaster information report should be submitted as early as possible in case advance assistance is needed. Additional updates within and after the 14 working day period can be submitted to the regional Municipal Services Office as more accurate damage assessment information becomes available.

Completing a municipal disaster information report

A municipal disaster information report assists the Minister to determine the appropriateness of ODRAP, and permits early consideration of financial assistance for immediate needs related to emergency response and cleanup. The following information is required:

- Extent of municipal damage suffered, including expenses incurred by other municipalities which support response operations or act as a Host Community;
- Preliminary cost estimate to restore, replace and/or repair damage to municipal property and infrastructure to pre-disaster condition;
- Other information council believes is pertinent (e.g., Conservation Authority reports, Environment Canada reports, etc.).

The package should include newspaper clippings, photographs and other documentary evidence where available.

The Minister may also consider:

- Severity of impact based on scientific evidence, e.g. level F1-F5 tornado, as determined by Environment Canada;
- Current financial capacity, debt ratio and capital commitments of the affected municipality;
- Local economic impact, e.g. tourism and ability to recover without provincial assistance; and
- Future financial pressures resulting from response and recovery costs.

Examples of eligible public losses and costs under ODRAP

Incremental, extraordinary municipal costs, over and above normal municipal expenditures, which are related to response and recovery from the disaster, may be eligible, such as:

- Food/water for volunteers and disaster relief workers;
- Emergency response supplies e.g. sandbags;
- Municipal owned equipment costs (at 50 per cent of MTO Rate) or equipment rental costs (prorated);
- Activation of the municipal emergency operations centre;
- Clearing and removal of debris and wreckage, including removal of buildings and removal of trees and limbs if public safety is endangered;
- Overtime for employees and those hired for disaster response/relief effort, or to backfill for regular employees deployed for disaster response/relief efforts;
- Incremental administrative costs related to disaster relief committee;
- Emergency communications;
- Additional security costs;
- Repair and restoration to pre-disaster condition of uninsured public facilities (e.g. buildings, libraries, recreational facilities including parks, roads and drains, infrastructure); and
- Evacuation and shelter of people and animals, including incremental operating expenses.

Examples of ineligible public losses and costs under ODRAP

- Regular salary;
- Insurance deductibles;
- Municipal equipment costs (other than as described above);
- Additional costs to repair or improve structures of infrastructure beyond pre-disaster condition (e.g. in a situation where a single-lane bridge is destroyed, its replacement cost can be established and used to contribute to the cost of replacing it with a two-lane bridge);
- Lost revenues (e.g. community centres or waste tipping fees).

6. PROVINCIAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE-PRIVATE DAMAGE COMPONENT

In the event of a natural disaster, individuals are expected to bear the initial responsibility for their losses. If the losses are so extensive that individuals cannot cope on their own, the municipality and the community at large are expected to provide support.

The private component of ODRAP is intended to provide the “necessities of life” to help those impacted by a natural disaster get back on their feet, when it is beyond the capacity of the municipality or community to assist.

Requiring a local Disaster Relief Committee

When the Minister declares a disaster area which includes private damages, the municipality is required to establish a disaster relief committee to implement the program locally. All funds raised for victims of the disaster event are channeled to the disaster relief committee. The province may match funds up to a 2 to 1 ratio to settle the claims, up to 90 per cent of the estimated eligible amount.

The Minister may alter funding arrangements depending on the magnitude and/or frequency of disaster(s), as well as the geographic location of the impacted municipality and/or unorganized area.

Submitting a municipal disaster information report

In addition to the municipal council resolution, the affected municipality must submit a municipal disaster information report (see Appendix B) containing an estimate of private damage losses within 14 working days from the onset of the disaster. The municipal disaster information report assists the Minister to determine the appropriateness of ODRAP, as it describes the impact of the event including:

- The magnitude of estimated private damage suffered by individuals/families, farms, small businesses and non-profit organizations;
- Number of damaged properties with insurance coverage;
- Preliminary cost estimate to restore, replace or repair essential property and contents to pre-disaster condition. This information can be gathered from those affected through a municipal survey or a registration process;
- Newspaper clippings, photographs and other documentary evidence where available;

- Other information council believes is pertinent (e.g., Conservation Authority reports, Environment Canada reports, etc.).

Advance assistance may be considered, so that cleanup and repairs to private property can get underway for safety and access purposes. Additional updates within and after the 14 working day period can be submitted to the regional Municipal Services Office as private damage assessments are refined.

Examples of eligible private losses and costs under ODRAP

- Restoration, repair or replacement to pre-disaster condition of a principal, year-round residence, farm buildings and principal business enterprise building;
- Essential furnishing of a private residence, including refrigerator, freezer, furnace, stove, clothes washer and dryer;
- Tools or other items essential to the claimant's livelihood, including farm machinery and equipment;
- For farms, replacement cost only of orchard trees;
- For business enterprises, replacement of inventory at cost;
- Livestock fencing;
- Restoration, repair or replacement to pre-disaster condition of churches, cemeteries, and other facilities of not-for-profit organizations, charities, service clubs;
- Emergency expenses (e. g. evacuation costs, food and shelter, generators, essential clothing);
- Perishable food.

Note: Some eligible items may only receive coverage to a maximum allowable amount

Examples of ineligible private losses and costs under ODRAP

- Losses covered by insurance;
- Insurance deductible;
- Secondary residences, e.g. cottages;
- Non-essential furniture, e.g. stereos, recreation room furniture;
- Landscaping, fencing, driveways and retaining walls;
- Recreational vehicles, e.g. boats, snowmobiles;
- Antiques and collections;
- Loss of revenue or wages;
- Losses recoverable by law.

7. DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE

A disaster relief committee should be established as soon as possible once a disaster area has been declared by the Minister. Individuals, families, farms, small businesses and non-profit organizations within the disaster area may submit claims to the local disaster relief committee whose purpose is to:

- Raise funds for the benefit of disaster victims; and
- Receive and settle the eligible claims of the victims as efficiently as possible.

Setting up the Committee

Municipal council should consider preparing a list of potential committee members in advance of the declaration or as early as possible, in order to ensure that the disaster relief committee can be activated expeditiously after a disaster area declaration by the Minister. The scope and nature of damages will help determine how many committee members are required.

The committee members cannot be members of council and should have no conflict of interest in the collection and distribution of funds. The committee should avoid selecting members who will likely be submitting claims for damages.

In unincorporated areas, the committee should be appointed by the organization or group that made the request for disaster area declaration (e.g. local services board).

If more than one jurisdiction is affected by a disaster, a joint disaster relief committee should be formed with representatives appointed from each of the affected jurisdictions. Equitable representation on the committee is encouraged.

Operations of the Disaster Relief Committee

The disaster relief committee and its sub-committees, if any, act autonomously from municipal council, operating within provincial guidelines to raise funds and settle claims. The committee ensures that all claims are dealt with fairly and equitably. Depending on the severity of the disaster, the disaster relief committee may operate for a period of several months or for up to one year or more, in order to receive and settle all claims. Members of the disaster relief committee receive no remuneration. They can be reimbursed for expenses, however, such as travel to meetings.

Usually program administration, financial records and payments are made by a municipality upon the recommendation of the disaster relief committee. The program administration costs of the disaster relief committee are incremental to normal municipal administration activities, and are eligible for reimbursement from the Ministry. These costs could include:

- A program manager to assist the disaster relief committee with day to day operations, fundraising and claim settlement;
- An insurance adjuster to assist with reviewing claims;
- Secretarial and other support staff fees, audit fees, stationary, printing, advertising and postage costs;
- Rental of office space and furniture if necessary.

All administrative expenditures of the local disaster relief committee must be documented and kept separate from fundraising. No administrative costs are to be deducted by the disaster relief committee from the locally raised funds. All donations must be channeled directly to the disaster relief committee to be matched with provincial funds up to 2:1 and used for claim settlement.

Responsibilities of the Disaster Relief Committee

The responsibilities of the committee are as follows:

1. Appoint a chairperson and appropriate vice-chairs for sub-committees, where established;
2. Appoint a treasurer and a secretary, if one is required. The treasurer should not be a member of the committee but should be a municipal staff person or, depending on the scale of the emergency, a paid contract position;
3. Establish a disaster relief fund and bank account to receive donations;
4. Register as a charity with Revenue Canada to receive a charitable registration number, if not available through the municipality;
5. Solicit donations to the fund and organize fundraising activities;
6. Establish procedures for the receipt, appraisal, and settlement of claims for losses and damage;
7. Advise the municipality to issue advance payments in exceptional circumstances not exceeding 50 per cent of the estimated eligible payout;
8. Distribute claim forms;

9. Advertise the existence of the fund, availability of assistance, and terms on which assistance will be provided;
10. Appraise damage for claims less than \$500 and, if necessary, hire professional adjuster(s) for claims greater than \$500;
11. Approve payments in a consistent manner based on reports from the adjuster and/or program manager, and in accordance with ODRAP guidelines and the committee's procedures;
12. Advise the municipality to make payments to claimants using the municipal financial system;
13. Hire auditors to review the activities of the fund and prepare an audit report; and
14. Submit an audited report to the regional Municipal Services Office for review and final payment of the provincial contribution.

Guidelines for Disaster Relief Committees

The regional Municipal Services Office will provide a copy of the *Guidelines for Disaster Relief Committees* for the use of the committee and sub-committee members. The Guidelines outline the operations of the committee and the roles and responsibilities of the sub-committees. They also contain a section on best practices used by other disaster relief committees and a checklist of items to assist newly appointed committee members.

Extreme Financial Hardship

In some instances, victims of a natural disaster may suffer extreme financial hardship because of losses and expenses which do not qualify for assistance under ODRAP and for which other sources of assistance are unavailable or inadequate. The disaster relief committee may provide additional financial assistance in these cases. A sub-committee having provincial representation must first be established to deal with the cases, as outlined in the Guidelines for Disaster Relief Committees.

8. EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN ONTARIO

Individuals and Families

Individuals and families are expected to take reasonable precautions to ensure their own safety and protection, as well as that of their property. An emergency survival kit should allow them to manage for a minimum of 72 hours without emergency intervention.

ODRAP is not an alternative to adequate private insurance coverage and sound risk management practices. Claims from households and businesses should be directed first to insurance companies to determine the policy holder's coverage.

In the event of a natural disaster, individuals are expected to bear the initial responsibility for their losses. If the losses are so extensive that individuals cannot cope on their own, the municipality and the community at large are expected to provide support.

Affected Municipality

Most incidents that do occur are handled at the local level by trained emergency responders. In the event of a larger incident, the head of council may decide to declare an emergency and assemble local officials at the municipal Emergency Operations Centre. This approach ensures a coordinated and effective strategic response. Often, municipalities augment their emergency response operations through mutual assistance agreements with neighbouring municipalities and special arrangements with local service organizations for emergency social assistance.

If an affected municipality has experienced extraordinary damage to its public property and infrastructure, damage claims should be directed first to insurance companies to determine coverage under municipal policies. Municipalities can contact the regional MMAH Municipal Services Office to discuss costs and eligibility for assistance for uninsured public and private property damage under ODRAP, as described earlier in this document.

First Nations Communities

The Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, Emergency Management Ontario, is responsible for coordinating arrangements and responding to an emergency in a First Nations community.

APPENDIX A: DISASTER CHECKLIST FOR MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

Completed	Pending	Task
		Municipal Emergency Response Plan activated? Follow procedures outlined in Municipal Emergency Response Plan. Contact Emergency Management Ontario, 416 314-0472 or 1 866 314-0472 (toll free) to report a declaration of a local emergency under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act.
		<p>Contact local Municipal Services Office of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing:</p> <p>Central – Toronto: 1-800-668-0230 Eastern – Kingston: 1-800-267-9438 Northeastern – Sudbury: 1-800-461-1193 Western – London: 1-800-265-4736 Northwestern – Thunder Bay: 1-800-465-5027</p> <p>Ask about appropriateness of assistance under ODRAP. Request clarification about the date for submitting a municipal council resolution and the Municipal Disaster Information Report. The resolution must be passed and forwarded to the Minister within 14 working days of the onset of the disaster event, along with the Municipal Disaster Information Report.</p>
		Establish a process for receiving reports of private damage from individuals, families, businesses, farms and not-for-profit groups such as a municipal call centre, online or door-to-door survey, if necessary. Record the number of damaged properties covered by insurance.
		Estimate amount of public and/or private damages using the Municipal Disaster Information Report. Fill in as much detail as possible, i.e. number of households/ businesses/ farms/non-profit organizations. Do not include damages sustained by cottages/seasonal properties. Map/chart/document damage area including peripheral areas. If possible, take pictures of damage.
		If there are reports of private damage, start fundraising as soon as possible.
		Contact local banks to arrange to receive donations until accounts can be opened by the disaster relief committee. Seek legal advice about issuing tax receipts for donations and/or applying to the federal government for the charitable organization tax status.
		Consider preparing a list of potential committee members in advance in order to ensure that the disaster relief committee can be activated expeditiously after a disaster area declaration is made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The scope and nature of damage will help determine how many committee members are required.
		Contact local press and advise them once the area has been declared a disaster area for ODRAP purposes.
		Establish a municipal council contact for the disaster relief committee.
		Contact local MMAH Municipal Services Office with date/time of inaugural meeting of the disaster relief committee.
<p>Once the disaster relief committee has been established, the committee can take over relief efforts. The committee will be given a copy of Guidelines for Disaster Relief Committees.</p>		

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MUNICIPAL DISASTER INFORMATION REPORT

- Date of the disaster event
- Date of emergency declared under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act
- Date of municipal resolution requesting a declaration of a disaster area by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing for the purpose of the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program
- Municipal contact information
- Description of disaster and characteristics of the area impacts
- Information about personal injury and losses
- Estimated costs of evacuation and shelter
- Description and cost estimate of public property damage
- Description and cost estimate of private damage
- Information about the need for early financial assistance

Contact the regional MMAH Municipal Services Office to receive a Municipal Disaster Information Report.

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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