

UPDATE

from the Ministry of Municipal
Affairs and Housing



January 2008

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**McGuinty Government
Actions Benefit
Ontario Municipalities**

MESSAGE FROM MINISTER JIM WATSON

Our government took significant steps forward during our first mandate. Some of our accomplishments include amendments to the Municipal Act, a new City of Toronto Act, new planning legislation and an updated Building Code. [Read more](#)



**McGuinty Government
Funding Local
Priorities**

MIDAS: THE NEW DATA ANALYSIS TOOL

The Municipal Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) is the new web tool for the access and analysis of municipal financial and performance data. [Read more](#)



**Communities to
Benefit from Ontario
Small Waterworks
Assistance Program**

**McGuinty Government
Strengthens Land
Ambulance Services**

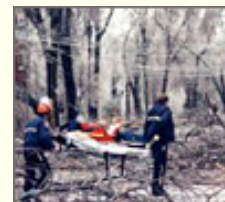
FOUR MILESTONE ANNIVERSARIES

January of 2008 marks four significant anniversaries. One year ago, three important pieces of provincial legislation were proclaimed and a new energy-friendly Building Code came into effect. [Read more](#)



ICE STORM ANNIVERSARY: EMERGENCY PLANNING REMINDER

Ten years ago this month a severe ice storm hit eastern Ontario and other regions of the country. "You can't exhaust the weather superlatives when you talk about the ice storm from hell," Environment Canada Senior Climatologist David Phillips recently told Canadian Press. [Read more](#)



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Minister's Message



Welcome again to UPDATE, the e-newsletter of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Our goal is to keep you informed on progress in the housing and municipal sectors.

Speaking of progress, our government took significant steps forward during our first mandate. Some of our accomplishments include amendments to the Municipal Act, a new City of Toronto Act, new planning legislation and an updated Building Code. This issue of UPDATE provides some details on the first anniversary of these significant initiatives.

We will not be resting on our laurels during our new mandate. For example, Premier McGuinty has charged me with the task of developing a new long-term affordable housing strategy. I will also be continuing our close working relationship with Ontario municipalities and strengthening our partnerships.

This issue of our e-newsletter highlights one example — a web-based tool for accessing and analyzing municipal fiscal and performance data, which was developed through a partnership between our ministry and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

This month marks another anniversary — it was 10 years ago that the infamous ice storm hit eastern Ontario and Quebec. No matter where you are in the province, the mere mention of the ice storm is likely to conjure up the vivid images that were in the media. Those of us who lived through it — I was the mayor of Ottawa at the time — remember the storm and the destruction it brought as awesome, in the true sense of the word.

While Ottawa and other communities were able to keep critical services working, there were many lessons learned. As recounted in this issue of UPDATE, all Ontario ministries and municipalities are now required by regulation to have an emergency management program. Ontarians will be prepared the next time a disaster of this scale happens.

I encourage you to provide us with your feedback on UPDATE. If this issue has been forwarded and you would like to continue receiving our e-newsletter, please take the time to subscribe.

Jim Watson
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

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MIDAS: The New Data Analysis Tool

A one-stop, click-of-the-mouse information manager, the Municipal Information and Data Analysis System (MIDAS) is the new web tool for the access and analysis of municipal financial and performance data.

MIDAS was developed in a partnership between the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing with funding provided by the Ministry of Finance's "Strengthening Our Partnerships" program.

Owned and operated by AMO, MIDAS will allow municipal staff and councillors to share and compare data with peer municipalities and set benchmarks for their own performance.

With the click of a mouse, users can convert Financial Information Return (FIR) and Municipal Performance Measurement Program (MPMP) data into meaningful reports and presentations.

This information can then be used at the local level to stimulate discussion and critical analysis on how municipal services can be delivered more efficiently and effectively.

"Benchmarking is an important part of municipal management, but often is time consuming and resource intensive," says Pat Vanini, AMO Executive Director. "Now with the advent of MIDAS, municipalities have access to a web-based tool that instantly converts the raw FIR data into meaningful reports, making benchmarking exercises convenient and fast."

MIDAS has already won an Award of Merit by the National Quality Institute's Canadian Quality Criteria for Public Sector Excellence.

Training for this simple, intuitive but powerful tool has been delivered in a variety of formats from group demonstrations to one-on-one sessions. For training possibilities in your area, or to join the over-200 municipalities with access to MIDAS, visit the [MIDAS](#) website.

Related links

- [Association of Municipalities of Ontario, MIDAS](#)



MIDAS team members Dennis Carter-Chand and Bohdan Wynnycky of MMAH and Deborah Hannah of AMO recently won kudos at the 2007 Public Sector Quality Fair

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Four Milestone Anniversaries

January of 2008 marks four [significant anniversaries](#).

One year ago, three important pieces of provincial legislation were proclaimed:

- One amended the Municipal Act, 2001
- A new City of Toronto Act, and
- A third providing the municipal sector with more planning tools and flexibility.

At the same time, a new energy-friendly Building Code came into effect.

Amendments to the [Municipal Act](#) and a new [City of Toronto Act](#) provided broad new powers and recognized municipalities as responsible, accountable governments by enabling them to better respond to their citizens' needs.

A new [Planning Act](#), also proclaimed at the beginning of 2007, recognized the need to manage land and resources in Ontario more effectively. Among the legislative changes were the establishment of a more effective and accessible process for community improvement and land use planning. The legislation also provides for more emphasis on local decision-making when land use appeals are heard at the Ontario Municipal Board.

One of the McGuinty government's initiatives to promote a culture of conservation was realized when a new [Building Code](#), with higher energy efficiency requirements, came into effect on December 31, 2006. The new Code also requires new buildings throughout the province be more accessible to people of all ages and abilities.



The three pieces of legislation and new Building Code reflect the McGuinty government's belief in strong communities, a commitment to healthier, more accessible buildings, and a visionary approach to land use planning.

Related links

- [Amendments to Municipal Act, 2001](#)
- [New City of Toronto Act](#)
- [Land Use Planning](#)
- [Ontario Building Code](#)

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Ice Storm Anniversary: Emergency Planning Reminder

Most readers will recall the severe ice storm that hit eastern Ontario and other regions of the country 10 years ago.

It was the worst natural disaster to hit Canada in recent memory.

"You can't exhaust the weather superlatives when you talk about the ice storm from hell," Environment Canada Senior Climatologist David Phillips recently told Canadian Press.

Phillips says, "...the total water equivalent of precipitation, comprising mostly freezing rain and ice pellets and a bit of snow, exceeded 85 mm in Ottawa, 73 mm in Kingston and 108 in Cornwall Previous major ice storms in the region.....deposited between 30 and 40 mm of ice – about half the thickness from the 1998 storm event!"



The ice storm of January 1998 severely tested the contingency plans of communities in eastern Ontario.

Minister Jim Watson was mayor of the City of Ottawa when the storm hit.

"I had just been on the job as Mayor for less than two months and was already declaring a state of emergency in Ottawa and beginning the process of overseeing Ottawa's greatest natural disaster in several generations," Minister Watson says. "Looking back on that time, I will always remember the City's public servants who went above and beyond the call of duty. They are one part of the many individuals who truly understood the meaning of public service."

The Minister saw first hand how a disaster of such magnitude affected residents and personal property, disrupted businesses and damaged public infrastructure. The city and its residents faced:

- A lack of food and essential supplies
- Flooded basements, and
- Roads slick with ice and fallen utility poles and transmission towers.

Power outages in some regions of the province lasted as long as a month.

The Ministry's Deputy Minister, John Burke, was Chief Administrative Officer of Ottawa at the time.

He recalls, "We had a business continuity plan in place for critical services so that hydro, fire, police, public works, water, sewer, key city public buildings and IT remained operational."

Ten years later, all Ontario ministries and municipalities are required by legislation to have an emergency management program. It is to include a contingency plan, staff trained to handle emergencies, an annual exercise and public education.

No community, or individual for that matter, would like to be caught unprepared in the proverbial eye of the storm.

Related links

- [Emergency Tools for Municipalities](#)

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