



Discussion Guide

Engagement on Proposed Modernization of the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*



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Introduction

The province is committed to ensuring a safe, practiced and prepared Ontario – before, during and after emergencies.

Last year, Ontario released the first [Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan](#), outlining the province's vision and roadmap for emergency management, designed to keep Ontario ready and prepared. On April 9, 2024, the province released the [first annual report on the plan](#), highlighting key actions Ontario has taken in coordination with partners to strengthen emergency management, as well as commitments to move the province's safety and resilience forward.

The [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) establishes the province's legal framework for managing emergencies. The legislation does this by setting out various authorities and responsibilities accorded to provincial ministries, municipalities and specific individuals.

The [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) and [Ontario Regulation 380/04: Standards](#) have not been comprehensively updated in over 15 years. Building on feedback to date from partners and stakeholders, Emergency Management Ontario has developed this discussion guide, taking into account what we have heard, to seek input to inform the proposed development of a modernized legislative framework that reflects an increasingly complex emergency landscape, is informed by best practices and lessons learned, and aligns with [Ontario's emergency management vision](#) for a safe, practiced and prepared Ontario.

Collaboration and coordination with partners and stakeholders are integral to advancing emergency management in the province. Responses from this engagement will help inform opportunities for how Ontario can modernize the emergency management legislative framework to strengthen the province's ability to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Focus Areas

To inform the development of a modernized emergency management legislative framework, Emergency Management Ontario is seeking input from emergency management partners, including municipalities, First Nation partners and Indigenous service organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, the broader public sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), as well as other interested individuals and organizations on the following **five key focus areas** to inform the proposed development of a modernized emergency management legislative framework reflective of Ontario's vision of a safe, practiced and prepared Ontario:

1. **The scope of an emergency and emergency management:** opportunities to strengthen Ontario's collective ability to prevent, mitigate, prepare, respond to and recover from emergencies of varying scopes, types and sizes.



2. **One window approach to provincial emergency management coordination:** opportunities to enhance provincial emergency management coordination for hazards and risks, including wildland fires, floods, pandemics, cyber-attacks and nuclear incidents, through clearer roles and responsibilities for provincial actors and processes for how Ontario collaborates with other jurisdictions, including the federal government.
3. **Enhancing coordination between government and emergency management partners, including broader public sector and external partners:** opportunities to enhance cross-sectoral collaboration and enhance emergency management capabilities, for example through Ontario Corps, to prepare for and respond to emergencies.
4. **Improving the consistency, quality and inclusivity of emergency management programs:** opportunities to align with international best practices for comprehensive, high-quality and inclusive emergency management programs with consideration of the needs of diverse and vulnerable populations in emergency management.
5. **Reflecting how Ontario works with First Nations in emergency management:** opportunities to guide how the province supports First Nations partners and Indigenous service organizations in Indigenous-led emergency management.

How to use this guide

The purpose of this guide is to ask for input to inform the proposed development of a modernized provincial emergency management legislative framework.

This guide has been designed to help organize your feedback. You do not need to answer all the questions in the guide and may answer questions that are of interest or concern to you.

Please send your response by email or regular mail **by August 26, 2024** as follows:

By e-mail to:

EMOpolicy@ontario.ca

By regular mail to:

Emergency Management Policy and Governance Branch
Emergency Management Ontario
Treasury Board Secretariat
315 Front St. W
Toronto, ON M7A 0B8



Focus Area 1: Scope of an emergency and emergency management

Emergencies can threaten public safety, health, the environment, property, continuity of critical services and the economy and can vary in intensity and complexity based on factors like timing, weather, infrastructure, geography, hazard type and demographics. Emergency management aims to support society to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from these situations, minimizing negative impacts across the province.

To manage emergencies, communities across Ontario rely on local capabilities outlined in their emergency plans and procedures, including using mutual aid or assistance agreements that allow the sharing of resources (such as first responders and evacuation centres) across communities. When a situation occurs that exceeds local capacities, the province mobilizes emergency resources and expertise to assist.

Since the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* was last comprehensively updated, Ontario's hazard and risk landscape has become increasingly complex – wildland fire seasons pose greater challenges, cyber-attacks are increasing in frequency and severity and critical infrastructure sectors face evolving threats while delivering essential services. To ensure that Ontario remains vigilant and flexible to address different types of emergencies, the *Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan* outlines key principles and goals to guide emergency management partners in continuous and enhanced focus on planning, readiness and response.

To deliver on the Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan and align with best practices towards the vision of a safe, practiced and prepared Ontario, Emergency Management Ontario has heard that there are opportunities to strengthen overall resilience to emergencies through increased flexibility to address emergencies of varying types and scales and additional clarity regarding roles and responsibilities for partners in all pillars of emergency management (prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery). In addition, Emergency Management Ontario has heard feedback that the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* could better support municipalities as the lead for local emergency management, by enabling greater flexibility in municipal powers and clarifying processes for accessing provincial support to efficiently address emergencies of varying types and scales.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework strengthen and ensure coordination in Ontario's collective roles and responsibilities to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from the



adverse impacts of emergencies? How can the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act* reflect emergencies of varying scopes, types and sizes?

2. How can the provincial emergency management legislative framework better empower and support municipalities with efficiently managing emergencies of different scales and types to protect their communities?
3. How can the provincial emergency management legislative framework clarify how and when the province supports and coordinates with local partners in managing emergencies of different scales and types?



Focus Area 2: One window approach to provincial emergency management coordination

Emergencies can have widespread impacts on many parts of society and managing them requires provincial collaboration and coordination on hazards and risks across government in coordination with emergency management partners.

To facilitate this collaboration and coordination and as set out in the [Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan](#), Emergency Management Ontario works as the one window for provincial emergency management coordination. In this role, Emergency Management Ontario proactively coordinates with municipalities, First Nations partners and Indigenous service organizations, provincial ministries, the federal government, organizations supporting vulnerable populations and other partners to facilitate preparedness, communication and information sharing, and emergency response supports.

Emergency Management Ontario has heard feedback that there are opportunities for the [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) to clarify and further enable Emergency Management Ontario's one-window role in coordinating and collaborating with emergency management partners to deliver on collective roles and responsibilities for emergency prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. This includes consideration to ensure that the necessary resources, processes and capabilities can be efficiently mobilized to address a wide range of incidents, regardless of their specific cause (for example, natural or technological).

Discussion Questions

4. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework enhance provincial coordination through Emergency Management Ontario as the one window for provincial emergency management coordination in all pillars of emergency management?
5. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework enable provincial coordination in preparing for and responding to a wide range of hazards and risks? For example, would enabling specific roles, functions or responsibilities for provincial actors in any emergency be beneficial?

Focus Area 3: Enhancing coordination between government and emergency management partners

In alignment with the goals of the [Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan](#), Ontario works together alongside emergency management partners, including municipalities, First Nations partners and Indigenous service organizations, federal partners, critical infrastructure owners and operators, the broader public sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), towards a shared commitment to safe and prepared communities across the province.



Ontario has been actively working to enhance the province's emergency management capabilities. This includes, for example, the development and mobilization of partnerships with NGOs through [Ontario Corps](#), and through the Ontario Critical Infrastructure Assurance Program, which works to assure Ontario's key facilities, systems and networks are resilient to threats from various hazards and risks.

There are a range of evolving threats and pressures that partners across Ontario face, such as extreme weather exacerbated by climate change or cyber-attacks, leaving them vulnerable and impacting their ability to maintain essential services. The current legislative framework does not sufficiently address cross-sectoral, cross-jurisdictional risk management and business continuity planning activities in Ontario that ensure the resilience of critical infrastructure or support integration with provincial and municipal programs.

To better support broader coordination and greater resiliency to hazards and risks across sectors (including critical infrastructure), Emergency Management Ontario recognizes that there are opportunities to formalize collaboration, information sharing and consistency in risk management practices across and within sectors. Emergency Management Ontario has also heard that there are opportunities to enhance coordination through leveraging agreements with NGOs and other stakeholders, supported by defined reporting and accountability measures.

Discussion Questions

6. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework:
 - a. Improve coordination across sectors including critical infrastructure entities and the broader public sector? Would enabling formalized roles and responsibilities support this goal?
 - b. Enhance situational awareness and proactive hazard and risk monitoring and data sharing across emergency management partners?
 - c. Enhance consistency in risk mitigation activities to support greater preparedness for hazards and risks across sectors?
7. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework support the effective coordination and oversight of partnerships with NGOs and other stakeholders to enhance the development and deployment of emergency management capabilities?



Focus Area 4: Improving the consistency, quality and inclusivity of emergency management programs

A key aspect of emergency management includes hazard and risk-based programs and activities. For example, under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*, municipalities in Ontario are responsible for developing and implementing emergency management programs (section 2.1). Current program requirements relate to preparedness and response activities and programs can include elements from all stages of emergency management.

The *Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan* highlights Emergency Management Ontario's work with partners on opportunities to enhance the quality of emergency management programs. This includes proactive planning and monitoring, and strengthened exercising and testing of multi-sector emergency plans.

Through a review of international best practices, Emergency Management Ontario understands that there is an opportunity to update emergency management program requirements and evaluation tools so that they better address all pillars of emergency management, support continuous improvement and focus on outcomes versus outputs. Emergency Management Ontario has also heard that there are opportunities for emergency management program requirements to support resources for key activities that will have the greatest impact, reduce administrative burden and enable collaboration in emergency management programs.

As outlined in the *Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan*, the province is committed to addressing the unique needs of vulnerable populations throughout the emergency management cycle. While emergency management programs in Ontario have been actively evolving to include the varied needs of vulnerable populations across the province, there is an opportunity to strengthen emergency management programs to ensure they are inclusive and minimize adverse impacts from emergencies on diverse communities.

Discussion Questions

8. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework better enable emergency management programs that are collaborative, outcomes-driven and continuously improving?
9. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework more efficiently focus emergency management program requirements for partners, including municipalities, on activities with the greatest impact, while maintaining programs that are effective and continuously improving?
10. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework support effective coordination with emergency management partners and inclusive emergency management programs that consistently and effectively consider the



needs of specific populations who may experience unique challenges during emergencies?



Focus Area 5: Reflecting how Ontario works with First Nations in emergency management

The [Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan](#) highlights the province's continued commitment to work with First Nations and Indigenous partners to understand community-specific challenges, needs and considerations for emergency management and to enhance opportunities for Indigenous-led approaches to emergency management. As outlined in the [2023 annual report](#) on progress, Ontario continues to enhance collaboration in support of this commitment by advancing the development of multilateral emergency management partnership agreements with First Nations communities, Indigenous service organizations and federal partners. These agreements will pave the way forward for a First Nations-led emergency management framework that recognizes First Nations as equal partners in emergency management, supports self-determination rights and ensures culturally appropriate and equitable emergency management services.

The [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#) does not reflect how Ontario works with First Nations and Indigenous service organizations in emergency management. Further to ongoing engagement with First Nations partners and Indigenous service organizations, the province is seeking feedback on how the provincial emergency management legislative framework could guide how Ontario supports Indigenous-led emergency management. The province is also seeking feedback from Indigenous partners on how to best enable and support approaches to enhancing the inclusivity of Ontario's emergency management plans and programs, such as ensuring culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous peoples are considered in the design and implementation of provincial programs, plans, public education and response activities.

Discussion Questions

11. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework guide how Ontario supports First Nations partners and Indigenous service organizations in Indigenous-led emergency management? For example, could the framework:
 - Outline key principles to guide the relationship between the province and First Nations partners and Indigenous service organizations to support Indigenous-led emergency management?
 - Acknowledge that First Nations and Indigenous service organizations lead the development of their communities' emergency management plans.
 - Acknowledge that First Nations and Indigenous service organizations are partners with the province in emergency management.
12. How can the province's emergency management legislative framework enhance the inclusivity of Ontario's emergency management plans and programs to support Indigenous peoples?





Summary Questions

13. What key objectives and principles should guide the province's emergency management legislative framework?
14. The province continues to reflect on and learn from past emergencies. Are there lessons learned or other insights or considerations to modernize the province's emergency management legislative framework that you wish to share in relation to your experience in past emergencies?

Additional Resources

- [Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act](#)
- [Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan](#)
- [Provincial Emergency Management Strategy and Action Plan 2023 Annual Report](#)
- [Emergency Management Ontario](#)