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## **Canadians concerned about possible water damage from storms, but may not be prepared for it: survey**

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Ninety percent of Canadians say they believe an extreme weather-related disaster is possible in their community, but few are prepared for the consequences that excess water from such events can have on their homes, notes a new report from Royal Bank of Canada.



Paved surfaces, overloaded infrastructure and severe weather conditions all create challenges for managing excess water, notes the [2013 RBC Canadian Water Attitudes Study](#), an online survey of 2,282 Canadians administered by GlobeScan between Jan. 23 and Feb. 1.

“Extreme storms have a direct impact on water, as storm water runoff can drag contaminants into local waterways and pollute water bodies that are important for recreation and water supplies,” Bob Sandford, chair of Canadian Partnership Initiative of the UN Water for Life Decade noted in a statement.

“All the impermeable surfaces in cities create the ideal condition for excess water to overwhelm our already strained municipal stormwater systems. Municipalities, property developers and homeowners must work together to better manage stormwater.”

Roughly two-thirds (68%) of those surveyed said Canadian towns and cities should be prepared for a major disaster though would affect stormwater management systems, but only 19% said major actions are required now, the report suggests. Nearly half (49%), however, did say that moderate action is required immediately.

When asked about what is most concerning about increased frequency and severity of extreme weather, water pollution, drought affecting farmers and decreased water supply levels were the top three, the report suggests.

Property damage also remained a concern, although RBC suggests homeowners may not be taking enough steps to take on potential excess water problems.

Of those surveyed, 23% say they have mitigated risk through landscaping with grading, and only 7% have replaced paved surfaces with water-permeable materials, the report notes, adding that managing the risk is up to individuals as well as municipalities.



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Some did say they would take steps this year to prevent water damage, such as maintaining eavestroughs and downspouts (64%) and doing landscaping such as grading (33%), the study suggests.

Paved surfaces, though, are still seen as a desirable attribute of a home, with 47% of those surveyed saying their "ideal" house would have a paved driveway or yard, the study notes.

The majority of those also wouldn't change their preference even when told about the positive impact of having permeable surfaces for reducing polluted runoff from rainwater and snow, RBC suggests.

"Canadians continue to have a love affair with paved driveways, and there's a serious trickle-down effect," Sandford said. "

With impermeable sidewalks, roadways and parking lots added to the mix, we've actually created the ideal condition for excess water to overwhelm our already strained municipal water and stormwater systems."

Beyond the individual level, ageing infrastructure in Canada is also presenting a major problem in terms of water damage.

Still, 78% of those surveyed said they trust their municipal water infrastructure is in good condition and don't see a need for major investments and 80% say they aren't willing to pay for necessary stormwater management system upgrades.

Other highlights from RBC's study include:

- 69% of Canadians are trying reasonably hard to conserve water, slightly down from 71% in 2012
- 30% of Canadian homeowners use rain barrels or other devices to collect rainwater runoff
- 54% of Canadians have paved driveways
- 47% say their ideal house has a paved driveway
- 60% of 18-34 year olds would give up a paved driveway to help water management
- 24% of urban dwellers have unpaved or water permeable driveways

The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that Canadian insurance industry paid \$1.7 billion in claims in recent years due to water damage. The organization has [published tips for keeping homes safe from water damage](#), and has launched a free iPad app, "Dry House Challenge," a game that shows homeowners how to prevent water damage in 15 potential problem areas around the house.



## Photos



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Caption: Key findings from the 2013 RBC Canadian Water Attitudes...

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