

## WHEN FLOODING IS THE NORM, THE STATUS QUO MUST GO

"They say it's 100-year storms - well it's a few years later and we're back in the same boat. Something is going on and we have to be conscious of it."

That's Premier Doug Ford talking about the threat of flooding in parts of Ontario and across Canada. It's a significant comment, because it's one of the rare times Ford has publicly confirmed he sees and understands the impact of climate-change induced extreme weather. That's encouraging.

Hopefully, his public recognition of the growing threat means he's open to reconsidering the unwise cuts his government is making to flood and water management in Ontario.

Ford's welcome, if overdue, acknowledgement of climate change should serve as a wake-up call to the shrinking number of deniers among us. Debate the extent to which human activity is contributing to the crisis if you will, but we need to stop denying the obvious. Our weather is changing, and not for the better, unless you happen to like frequent and unpredictable flooding. And we are not prepared for Waterworld.

If we are serious about mitigating the impacts of extreme weather - in this case flooding - we need to do more than break out the sandbags. As the premier said, we're not talking once in 100 years any more. We're not even talking once a decade. Two years ago high water records were broken, and this year those records will be broken again in some places.

What do we need to do? For one thing, we need to revisit where we allow and even encourage development. Historically, development in flood-prone areas has been acceptable. Living in proximity to the water appeals to many, for good reasons. And with that proximity, the risk of flooding has always existed. But we're not talking about manageable risk any longer. We're talking instead about near certainty.

We've all been watching and sharing the anxiety of homeowners as they fret for their property. Some are repeat victims - some in Quebec were flooded out in 2017 and only recently fully repaired their homes. Now they're at risk again.

Two premiers, Francois Legault of Quebec and Blaine Higgs of New Brunswick, are openly talking about relocating homeowners away from flood-prone areas. Legault has been particularly blunt, saying high-risk homeowners can't be compensated for flood damages year in and year out. He may be a bit harsh, but he's not wrong.

Even if governments don't insist on relocation, insurance companies soon will - home and flood insurance will be prohibitively expensive or simply not available.

It's not just about flooding. The increase in violent storms and heavy rains is straining municipal infrastructure across the country. Improving storm water management systems is essential and won't be cheap. Neither is improving erosion control, another must-have to mitigate extreme weather. Chances are, right now, you're paying more for those services, and that's a direct result of climate change.

We could have started to work on climate change mitigation sooner. But we didn't. Now we're paying the piper. Covering his bill isn't going to be easy.

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## FINDING THE BLACK HOLE IN THE NIGHT SKY

### FIRST PHOTO CHANGED ASTRONOMICAL HISTORY, WRITES MARIO CARR



MARIO CARR  
Column

Einstein was right. Black holes do exist.

On April 10, the first image of a black hole changed astronomical history.

It was found in the heart of a gigantic elliptical galaxy 55 million light years

away known as Messier 87.

Einstein first proposed the existence of these cosmic vacuum cleaners that suck up light and matter more than 100 years ago.

In 1774, French astronomer Charles Messier started publishing a list of celestial objects known as the Messier catalogue. M87 is one of those objects. If you have a telescope, with some patience you can see M87 for yourself in the evening sky in the Virgo constellation.

First, locate the handle of the Big Dipper. Then draw an imaginary arc with your finger towards to the next brightest star. That's Arcturus in the constellation, Bootes. From there, spike down with your fin-

ger towards the horizon to the next bright star called Spica in the constellation Virgo. Through a telescope, find the Virgo cluster of about 1,200 galaxies, which includes M87.

Here are May stargazing events, which are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar.

**May 10:** The Moon was below the Beehive galaxy M44.

**May 18:** The full Moon is called the Flower Moon.

*Mario Carr is the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers' director of publicity. He can be reached at mario-carr@cogeco.ca or followed on Twitter @MarioCCarr.*

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