



Honourable Rebecca Schulz
Minister of Environment and Protected Areas
204 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Re: Time Sensitive Request - Calgary Flood Hazard Map

Dear Minister Schulz,

We would like to thank you for the video message you provided for our Calgary River Communities Action Group (CRCAG) annual general meeting last week. Your engagement in these important matters was well received and much appreciated.

It was extremely concerning for our membership to learn from the Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA) representatives at our meeting, that AEPA is planning to publish a draft Calgary flood hazard map *within the month* that **does not account for the mitigating impacts of either the Springbank Off-Stream Reservoir (SR1) or the Sunnyside floor barrier**, even though both projects will be complete and operational in 2025. We have a simple request for you and your department – please delay releasing (even in draft form) the Calgary flood hazard map until SR1 and the Sunnyside flood barrier are operational *and* the flood hazard map accounts for their flood mitigation impact. Further, we ask that the work to prepare a Calgary flood hazard map that *does* account for the impact of SR1 be prioritized, as we understood that it is not yet being worked on.

AEPA explained that the Province's new flood hazard maps will reflect the protection provided by dedicated flood berms and consider the impact of upstream dams dedicated to flood control. Although this is good news, with the Province spending three-quarters of a billion dollars to construct SR1, designed to protect Calgary from a 1:200 year flood event, the idea that the positive impact of the Province's largest-ever flood mitigation project for Calgary would not be accounted for in the Calgary flood hazard map is unfathomable. The flood hazard map is a key reference for municipal land development decision makers and buyers, lenders and insurers of properties in flood impacted areas. For example, for a time following the 2013 flood, certain banks would not provide mortgages to Calgary properties based on their flood hazard map designation, i.e., flood hazard designations impact homeowners.

The new Calgary flood hazard map will not enlarge the "floodway" (which has very restrictive building requirements under Calgary's Land-Use Bylaw), but will include a new designation of "[high hazard flood fringe](#)". The flood hazard map will also include a new designation of "protected flood fringe" to indicate areas that would be flood fringe, but for the mitigating impact of dedicated flood berms or upstream dams. **However, because neither SR1 nor the Sunnyside flood barrier will be operational in Spring 2024 (when AEPA plans to finalize the map), there will no "protected flood fringe" indicated on the Calgary flood hazard map attributed to these projects.**

Our membership is extremely concerned about the imminent public release of the draft Calgary flood hazard map for these reasons:

1. The map will be finalized in Spring 2024, yet completely outdated with respect to the Elbow River communities within a year, and definitely before the next flood season in 2025, when SR1 comes online, *and* outdated for Sunnyside when its barrier is operational later in 2025.
2. There is an expectation that many areas currently labelled “flood fringe” will change to the ominous sounding “high hazard flood fringe” designation, even though with the operation of SR1, these would more appropriately be *entirely outside* the flood fringe, or at worst in the “protected flood fringe”.
3. Until the flood hazard maps undergo *another* update, the “high hazard flood fringe” label will persist, likely for many properties in Elbow River communities, even though misleading for buyers and developers and highly prejudicial to homeowners.
4. Our membership has *no confidence* that by Spring 2025, once SR1 is operational – a new version of the Calgary flood hazard map will be immediately released, based directly on answers from the AEPA representatives at the meeting (when asked the question several times), and because the maps generally are updated very infrequently (i.e., 10-20 years).

Our organization has been advocating for over a decade that the appropriate sequence is to (1) mitigate; (2) map; and (3) implement policy. Releasing a map that is inherently outdated within months of a release defies logic – and undermines the work of AEPA in selecting the project and Alberta Transportation in designing and constructing the project, and prejudices the taxpayers who are funding this incredibly expensive and highly critical piece of infrastructure.

Despite our major concern, we do want to thank you and staff in your department for taking on this important work. Accurate flood mapping will keep Albertans safe, encourage investment and preserve important riparian areas. However, we do think it will be hugely embarrassing for AEPA to release the Calgary flood hazard map a few months before SR1 becomes operational but showing Elbow River communities with new flood hazard designations seemingly far worse than before SR1 was built – leaving the impression the \$750M project was all for naught.

As this matter is extremely time sensitive with the release of the draft Calgary flood hazard map imminent, we would like to meet with you on this critical matter (either in person or virtually) as soon as possible. Once the draft Calgary flood hazard map is available online – the damage is done and will be very difficult to undo.

Sincerely,

“Tony Morris” and “Brenda Leeds Binder”

Tony Morris and Brenda Leeds Binder
Co-Presidents on behalf of the CRCAG Board

cc:

Mayor Jyoti Gondek
Terry Wong, Councillor Ward 7
Courtney Walcott, Councillor Ward 8