

Changes to Manitoba's Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) Program FAQs for Local Authorities

What Are the Core Changes to the DFA Program?

- Manitoba is changing its Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) program to help people, organizations and communities build back better.
- Manitoba's new DFA program recognizes fixing the same damages over again isn't effective or sustainable. It's a lot smarter to invest in risk mitigation and protective improvements.
- The new DFA program also recognizes that people and communities need more holistic recovery support after disasters.
- Manitobans will see an immediate increase in support through the new program.
 - We are cutting red tape to provide assistance more quickly.
 - We are expanding the program to cover more farms, businesses and non-profits.
 - The amount of support we can provide is increasing, and new types of support – such as upgrades to help prevent future damage and mental health counselling – will be available.
- Manitoba will be implementing additional supports incrementally as we develop agreements, policies, and tools for new programming:
 - Targeted support for vulnerable people.
 - Additional disaster mitigation funding to address vulnerabilities across Manitoba.
 - Supports for recovery and resiliency planning.

What Is Not Changing?

- Manitoba's DFA Program will continue to be a program that provides financial assistance for the recovery needs of Manitobans following an acute natural disaster.
- DFA remains a post-disaster program.
- Expenses are eligible only if adequate insurance is not available.

This information is based on draft regulation. Feedback from online consultations will be shared with government and may result in changes to the regulation before it becomes final.

How Can I Share Feedback?

- The draft regulation will be open for public comment until **April 27, 2025** on the EngageMB website: <https://engagemb.ca/disaster-financial-assistance-regulation>
- Manitoba EMO welcomes feedback at any time and may be contacted at dfa@gov.mb.ca

Where Can I Learn More?

- The draft regulation is available for review on the EngageMB website: <https://engagemb.ca/disaster-financial-assistance-regulation>
- Manitoba EMO will be hosting a series of targeted webinars in April 2025 for: local authorities and watershed districts; individuals, homeowners and tenants; and small businesses, farms and non-profit organizations.
 - Links for local authorities and watershed districts are available upon request.
 - Links for public webinars are on the EMO website: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/emo/dfa/webinar.html>
- Manitoba EMO will continue to engage with stakeholders in the coming months.

What Happens if There is an Event This Spring?

- Manitoba will be ready to manage a DFA program under the new rules if a major disaster strikes this spring.
- Manitoba EMO will provide training and support to help local authorities, organizations, and households navigate the new program.

How Will Manitoba EMO Help Local Authorities Manage These Changes?

- Manitoba EMO is working to simplify processes and provide more support.
 - A dedicated liaison will answer claim questions and ensure all required documentation is submitted.
 - Manitoba EMO is developing training programs, tools, templates and guidance documents to help local authorities manage their DFA claims.
- Manitoba EMO is working on an information package that municipalities can provide to residents in the event of a widespread natural disaster or DFA program.

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Is the Municipal Cost-Share Changing?

Despite Canada increasing PT costs under DFAA 2.0, Manitoba will not make changes to the local authority cost-sharing.

- Cost-sharing will continue to be calculated based on municipal populations.
- Cost-sharing will continue to be indexed to inflation.
- Municipalities can still receive their deductible back if they invest the amount into a local disaster risk reduction project through the Mitigation and Preparedness Program (MPP). This option is available when disasters are cost-sharable with Canada.

How Does Build Back Better (BBB) Funding Work?

- The new DFA program allows local authorities to build back better, unlike the previous program which would only cover the cost of repairs to pre-disaster conditions.
- All damaged assets can receive the equivalent of 15% of the cost of standard replacement value – which is the cost to repair the asset to pre-disaster conditions –to undertake disaster-resilient enhancements.
 - These enhancements must align with published disaster resilience guidelines.
 - Manitoba EMO is developing a Manitoba-based Disaster Resilience Enhancement Guide that outlines eligible activities.
- Upgrades required to meet building codes and standards will continue to be considered standard recovery costs.

How Does Disaster Mitigation Funding Work?

- Canada has an additional pot of strategic mitigation funding available to provinces to undertake additional improvements to reduce future disaster risks.
- Unlike previous DFA, Canada has made the disaster mitigation funding fairly flexible to include things such as relocating assets like flood-prone assets or for upstream mitigation projects to reduce risks in damaged areas.
- Manitoba EMO is developing policies for how to best direct these funds and will continue conversations with provincial departments and local authorities to ensure we get this right.

How Does the MPP Program Work?

- The Mitigation and Preparedness Program (MPP) is an opportunity for eligible local authorities to build local resiliency against extreme weather events and invest in disaster mitigation and preparedness.

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- An MPP program is only established for disasters that are cost-shareable with Canada and when a Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) program is approved by the Manitoba government.
- When Manitoba establishes a DFA program that is cost-shareable with Canada under the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements, eligible local authorities have the option to either:
 - Pay the DFA deductible based on the current cost-sharing formula; or
 - Under the MPP, receive 100 per cent of eligible DFA costs back from Manitoba and invest the amount that would have been the deductible into an approved disaster mitigation and preparedness project.

Can BBB, Disaster Mitigation and MPP Funding Be Combined?

- Yes – as long as the mitigation project aligns with eligibility requirements and is approved in advance by EMO.
- Manitoba EMO is still developing policies for how to best direct disaster mitigation funds.

Why is the Deductible Changing for Individuals and Organizations?

- Manitobans are expected to share in the cost of their recovery.
- The previous program applied a 20% deductible to all private sector claims.
- The new program applies a minimum deductible of \$2,500 or 20%, whichever is greater.
- The new minimum deductible ensures that assistance is focused on those that who cannot recover without government assistance.
- DFA is a program of last resort and is not a substitute for insurance.
- Expenses are eligible only if adequate insurance is not available.

How Will Vulnerable People be Supported by DFA?

- Under the new DFAA, eligibility has expanded to allow governments and non-profit organizations to provide targeted and temporary support to individuals, households or populations who are more likely to experience disproportionately negative recovery outcomes.
- This includes unhoused and precariously housed people.
- These supports are available for up to **three years** after a disaster and can include temporary housing, case management and transition planning. Manitoba will be implementing these supports incrementally as we develop agreements, policies, and tools for new programming.

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What Triggered These Changes?

- Canada released new Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA) that set the rules for providing disaster assistance to provinces and territories.
- The new rules took effect on April 1, 2025.
More information is on the Public Safety Canada website.

Why is Canada Changing Its Program?

- The previous program expired on March 31, 2025.
- The rising frequency, impacts, and costs related to disasters drove Canada to initiate a review of its Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements.
- The previous program would only pay to rebuild to pre-disaster conditions. Canada recognized the need to build back better and invest in disaster risk reduction.

Does Manitoba Have to Follow Canada's Rules?

- No – provinces and territories set their own rules for financial assistance.
- Manitoba has historically aligned its DFA program with Canada's DFAA to maximize cost-sharing with Canada for disasters.
- Manitoba is not required to expand the program to receive federal support for other eligible costs – it is choosing to invest in improving recovery outcomes and building more resilient communities.

Why is Manitoba Investing in a More Costly DFA Program?

- Changes to Canada's DFAA will download a greater share of costs to provinces and territories while also expanding coverage.
- Manitoba is choosing to leverage Canada's new DFAA to expand recovery supports and build back better following a disaster.

When Will These Changes be Complete?

- Canada's new DFAA were only recently finalized and represent a foundational shift in disaster recovery.
- Manitoba will be implementing DFA program changes incrementally as we develop agreements, policies, and tools for new programming.
- Manitoba EMO is also working to make the process simpler and faster for claimants and to improve program outcomes.
- We will provide regular updates to local authorities and other stakeholders about the rollout of new programs, policies and tools.

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How are Things Changing in High-Risk Areas?

- Canada has changed the way it assesses risk – it is now using a 1-in-200 year flood protection level (1:200 FPL) instead of the previous standard of 1:100 FPL.
- That means more areas in Manitoba may be designated as high risk.
- New construction in high-risk areas must be appropriately mitigated to 1:200 to qualify for future disaster financial assistance.
- Existing assets in high-risk areas will initially remain eligible for DFA. If they experience major damage, they must be appropriately mitigated to 1:200 to retain future eligibility for DFA.

What Is Major Damage?

- Major damage means significant impact to the safety, structural integrity or critical function of an asset where the asset is unable to function as intended and requires significant repairs or total reconstruction.

What Does Appropriate Mitigation Mean?

- Appropriate mitigation means an asset is not expected to experience major damage in an event at or below the 1:200 FPL.
- These assets will likely experience minor damage, and they would still be eligible for support if they suffer major damage in a flood which exceeds the 1:200 FPL.
- Mitigation can be site-specific or community-level protection.
- Manitoba will be leveraging its current third-party engineering service provider to work with municipalities to identify these sites during the inspection process and develop options for appropriate mitigation.

How is Canada's Cost Sharing Formula with Manitoba Changing?

- Canada's current cost-sharing formula increases the federal share as the scale of the disaster increases. It tops out at 90% of disaster costs.
- The new formula applies flat rates to different categories of expenses.
 - Recovery costs – which are the largest portion of a program – are reimbursed at 70%.
 - Response costs are reimbursed at 80%.
 - Disaster mitigation in high-risk areas and psychosocial support costs are reimbursed at 90%.

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General Questions About the DFA Program

What is Manitoba's DFA Program?

- Manitoba's DFA program provides financial assistance for uninsurable losses to essential property damaged by a natural disaster. It also provides assistance for disaster-related response.
- Manitoba's DFA is a program of last resort and is meant to re-establish a basic standard of living and function.
- DFA is not a substitute for private insurance and does not compensate applicants for lost revenue, inconvenience, non-essential damages, injuries, or lost wages.

When is a DFA Program Established?

Not all natural disasters will result in a DFA program being established. DFA programs may be established when these criteria are met:

- The disaster occurs as a result of a natural hazard;
- Has a determinable beginning date and has or will have a determinable end date;
- Occurs in a geographic area that can be specified;
- Causes widespread damage and disruption to essential assets or essential services in the geographic area that result in a significant financial burden on Manitobans.

What is Manitoba's Cost-Sharing Threshold with Canada?

- Manitoba's cost-sharing threshold with Canada is currently \$5.8 million for disaster events occurring after April 1, 2025.
- The per capita cost for provinces and territories is adjusted annually for inflation and is based on annual population estimates by Statistics Canada.

Is Drought Eligible for DFA?

- No. Long-term environmental conditions, such as droughts, do not meet the DFAA requirement for a disaster to have a definable start and end date. This is also the case for other prolonged and underlying weather conditions such as El Niño or La Niña cycles or climate change. While these may contribute to the frequency of storms, they are not in and of themselves distinct disasters.

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What Other Sources of Funding Are Available for Municipal Infrastructure Repairs?

- Municipal and Northern Relations provides comprehensive funding support to all 137 municipalities to address operating and capital priorities through the Strategic Municipal Investment Fund.
- Manitoba Growth, Renewal and Opportunities for Municipalities is an application-based program designed to help Manitoba municipalities advance critical infrastructure that will support growing and sustainable communities.
- Manitoba EMO maintains a list of funding opportunities that can help reduce the impact of future disaster events on its website:
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/emo/funding/mitigation/index.html>

Are Wildfires Eligible for DFA?

- The DFAA does not apply to the fighting of forest, prairie, grass or wildfires **except** where wildfires impact communities. These are known as interface fires and are eligible for DFA if they pose a threat to built-up areas (e.g., a threat to human life, private property, public infrastructure, critical infrastructure, etc.) **and result in** an evacuation, **or** property damage, **or** disruption of the delivery of essential goods and services.
- Since fire is an insurable hazard, most wildfires do not cause sufficient uninsured damages to merit a DFA program.

Who Manages Disasters Impacting First Nations Communities?

- Disasters which impact First Nations communities are supported by Indigenous Services Canada's Emergency Management Assistance Program (EMAP).
- Canadian Red Cross is contracted to provide emergency and disaster services on behalf of the EMAP program.

How Can Municipalities be Reimbursed for Hosting Evacuees?

- Municipalities are expected to provide financial support to mandatory evacuees for the first 72 hours of an evacuation.
 - When a Disaster Financial Assistance (DFA) program is established, costs incurred by municipalities during the 72-hour period will be evaluated, and eligible costs will be assisted with under the municipality's DFA public sector claim.
- After 72 hours and up to 30 days, provincial Emergency Social Assistance (ESS) may be available to provide assistance to evacuated households.
- After 30 days of a mandatory evacuation, any assistance through provincial ESS will cease and evacuees that had received ESS supports will be referred to DFA by ESS.

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- The DFA program will provide assistance for costs incurred to cover basic expenses for accommodations, food and other essentials based on Government of Manitoba approved rates.
- Short term, temporary housing assistance is available through the DFA program to eligible individuals who cannot reoccupy their homes as a result of the damage caused by a disaster. To be eligible, the individuals receiving assistance must be actively engaged in the restoration of their damaged property.

How Does ESS Reimburse Municipalities for Hosting Evacuees?

- Evacuated residents who are evacuated by provincial Emergency Social Services (ESS) receive money towards the cost of food and personal needs for up to 30 days.
- It is anticipated that many evacuated residents will contribute to the local economy as they purchase meals and other needed items.
- Lodging, such as hotels, are directly billed to the Province of Manitoba after the first 72 hours of the evacuation.
- ESS will pay all applicable rental rates for municipal spaces including but not limited to community centres, recreation facilities, and municipal-owned campgrounds.
- Should ESS need to engage municipal staff outside of their regular working hours (such as a janitor opening a community centre after hours or providing additional cleaning), ESS will pay all overtime staffing costs provided a discussion took place ahead of time.
- Any other costs incurred by the municipality can be discussed with ESS staff. There is no guarantee of coverage.

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