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NEWS LOCAL

Storm danger real: scientist

Sun, May 13, 2007

By [JONATHAN SHER](#), SUN MEDIA



lfpress.com



Torrential rains brought on by global warming may increasingly overwhelm city storm sewers across Canada, a London scientist warns.

The super storms will lead to major floods like those that in the last few years struck Peterborough and Stratford, the latter leading to a \$220-million lawsuit against that city.

"I don't think we have to look too far into the future," said Slobodan Simonovic, who directs UWO's Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction.

A Free Press article this week about Simonovic's research has prompted city hall engineers to review his work and call on Ontario officials to do the same.

"I think it's the obligation of the province to review this information," said Berta Krichker, an engineer who oversees the way the city manages storm water.

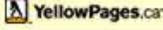
Simonovic's research predicts severe summer storms will raise the Thames River to record levels, beyond what led to the biggest recorded flood in London's history in 1937.

Those rainfalls may also overwhelm the city's storm sewers, he said, a warning that an official with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority takes seriously.



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"That potentially is a bigger problem than flooding along the Thames," said Jeff Brick, who co-ordinates flood control for the conservation authority.

Simonovic contends areas along the river and the city's storm sewer system are vulnerable because standards to contain the water in them weren't designed to deal with severe storms due to climate change.

"I feel the (provincial and federal) governments are ignoring this fact and avoiding the question of revisiting standards and the reason is, probably, the costs," he said.

Krichker believes the city's storm water system is sufficient but her belief is based on past, not projected, storms.

London's storm sewers now have enough capacity to deal with the sort of major storm that strikes once every five years -- at least according to past data -- Krichker said.

When storms exceed that capacity, excess water travels over land until it reaches a waterway, she said.

The system has worked well and Krichker believes it will continue to do so -- but Simonovic isn't so sure.

If a storm hits worse than that which caused the flood in 1937, the Thames may overflow, leaving nowhere for water on the ground to go.

London officials previously committed to closely monitoring Dingman and Stoney creeks but Simonovic believes more is needed - they need to know how to manage the storms of the future.

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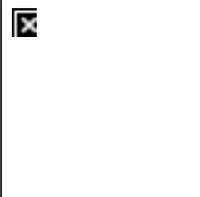
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