

New Brunswick

Balanced approach critical to tackling N.B. flooding, says researcher




'Mitigation options are usually of significant costs and they have to be justified'

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One of flooded buildings on Grand Lake that has been tethered to nearby trees. (Shane Fowler/CBC)

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Should places like New Brunswick mitigate flooding or better adapt to it?

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Both is the answer from a researcher at Western University in London, Ont.

"The question is [what should be] the balance between these two approaches?" asked Slobodan Simonovic, a professor in the university's civil and environmental engineering department.

Simonovic said the right balance of mitigation and adaptation will vary in different parts of the country.

"Mitigation options are usually of significant costs and they have to be justified by prevention of adequate level of damage," he said.

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Slobodan Simonovic is a professor in the civil and environmental engineering department at Western University in London, Ont. (Submitted by Slobodan Simonovic)

Mitigation centres on reducing the magnitude of flooding. It could be structural protections like diverting water channels or building dikes.

Adaptation focuses on adjusting the rules pertaining to land use around the water.

Since mitigation tends to be expensive, Simonovic recommended New Brunswick look at adaptation options.

"If you look at the experiences of other places from across the country, the difference between New Brunswick and the St. John River and flooding in that particular region compared to other regions is the population," Simonovic told CBC's *Shift*.

"The population of this region is smaller and if you look at the population and cost of mitigation measures, it would be very hard to justify their implementation."

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Simonovic also said adaptations should be made immediately after a flood. Otherwise the risk can be forgotten.

"Usually the response of the general population, media, politicians and all other decision-makers is very short," he said.

"You have a window of opportunity after the disaster where the attention is very high to do something and if you miss that window of opportunity that attention and those who are making decisions are on to something else."

