

Manitoba gears up for Red River flooding

by UPI

WINNIPEG, Manitoba -- Canadian communities along the Red River in southern Manitoba are under a serious flood warning threat and busy making sandbags and breaking ice jams.

A winter's worth of heavy snow in North Dakota and the spring thaw are swelling the north-running river that empties in Lake Winnipeg, officials in Winnipeg said.

In that city, officials said in a worst-case scenario this year, some 300 properties would require about 760,000 sandbags, the Winnipeg Sun reported.

The city has a "floodway," or canal system circumventing the city, and permanent dikes have also been built in many places.

Meanwhile, ice-breaking machines are being deployed to the north in anticipation of the flood swells, said Water Stewardship Minister Christine Melnick.

"When we get ice jams there can be a real backup of water," she said. "This way we're helping Mother Nature do her job of moving the ice out into Lake Winnipeg."

The province is scheduled to issue its flood forecast Friday and Winnipeg will follow suit next week, the newspaper said.

The city was completely flooded by the river in 1950 and also badly saturated in 1997.

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