

**CMC news bulletin**  
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## **CANADIAN LEGISLATOR SAYS THOUSANDS COULD PERISH IF DAM COLLAPSES IN GUYANA**

GEORGETOWN, Guyana, CMC - A Canadian legislator, who recently paid a two-day visit to flood-stricken areas in Guyana, is warning that a collapse of the 150-year old Dutch constructed East Demerara Water Conservancy (EDWC) dam, could result in the death of thousands of people in the country.

"Guyana as we know it today would cease to exist," said Jim Karygiannis, Parliamentary Secretary to the Transport Minister.

In a report posed on the Internet, the legislator warned if the dam collapses "there is a very real possibility that thousands would perish - from the flood itself and from disease".

Karygiannis quoted Ravi Narine, Chief Executive Officer of the Drainage and Irrigation (D&I) Board as saying "if it breaks, we will lose the coast".

According to the Internet report, Narine told the visiting Canadian legislator if the Conservancy dam, which protects 200 square feet of water, breaks, "most of the populated coastal area of Guyana would be flooded and that the seawall could collapse".

"This would cause the coastline of Guyana to recede up to 20 miles inland, requiring the immediate evacuation of up to forty per cent of the population."

The report said if the EDWC dam fails "the only way to evacuate people would be by boat. The feeling was that airport would remain above water but the road to the airport would be quickly flooded and not be passable".

"Should the international community be able to respond quickly enough to be able to evacuate people, with Georgetown under water, there is no community large enough to take the refugees."

"The national government would not be able to function as there would be major disruptions in communications, government offices would be underwater and government members, themselves, would have to be evacuated," Karygiannis wrote in his report.

He said, "agriculture, which is conducted on the coastal plain, would be wiped out - fields would be flooded and livestock would drown".

"If this should happen, there is a very real possibility that thousands would perish - from the flood itself and from disease. Guyana as we know it today would cease to exist."

To prevent this urgent repairs must be carried out to the tune of some US\$3.5 million.

Great Britain has committed £500,000 (US\$900,000) and the United States is providing US\$1.2 million to help in the EDWC rehabilitation effort.

"There is an urgent need for US\$1.4 million," Karygiannis said.

In a four-point recommendation to the Canadian government, Karygiannis urged the administration to "provide the Cooperative Republic of Guyana with the US\$1.4 million to help with the immediate repairs needed to be done on the East Demerara Conservancy dam".

He said this should be done through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and also suggested that the Canadian Government investigate ways to provide Guyana with the relevant technical assistance, and to "investigate ways to contribute to the on-going repairs to the East Demerara Conservancy dam".

The Canadian government should also "investigate ways to help the people of Guyana develop their society so that they can take their rightful place in the world," the Karygiannis said in the report.

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