

VIDEO: 'This is one of the worst years'

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Darlings Island residents are expressing frustration after flooding forced the closure of the lone road to the mainland.

The road remained closed Monday afternoon for a second day after the Hammond River and Darlings Lake spilled their banks over the Darlings Island Road making it unpassable. Cars lined both sides of the road beyond the flooding as some residents, clad in tall rubber boots, braved the knee-high water at 1 p.m.'s high tide, often tipping out their boots once they got to the other side. Other residents milled about the road discussing what has become an all-too-familiar sight, having witnessed similar events in 2014 and 2008. Jeff Hull, communications officer at the Department of Transportation and

Infrastructure, said via email they are monitoring the ongoing road closure. It is unclear as to when the road is expected to be open.

Children seemed most excited about the closure, hopping off the school bus and joining their parents or guardians on the side of the road. Adults zipped up their rain jackets, tightened the straps on their backpacks, and made sure their feet were snug in their rain boots, preparing them for the 20-minute walk ahead. A toddler looked to be enjoying her unusual afternoon walk, sitting comfortably on the shoulders of her father high off the ground.

Cheryl and Dave Campbell have lived on the island for almost a decade and say they are upset a remedy for the flooding has yet to be found.

They said they usually find out about the road closing by volunteer firefighters, but that this year they were given no official warning. Instead, they found out on Facebook and by word of mouth.

"This is one of the worst years, especially because there's no boat or transportation going across," Cheryl Campbell said. "And this year they raised our taxes significantly, charged us for the assessment, didn't do the assessment, and we still have no boat, no access, no transportation."

Cheryl Campbell said the flood caused her to miss work.

"I am a casual nurse so I'm the last resort anyway," she said, noting she lost a shift Sunday. "When I don't show up, that leaves the shift uncovered."

She did note that the shifts were covered by other nurses but is frustrated by the losses. She said she has written several letters to provincial officials to fix the problem.

Craig Buck and Courtney Buck, young adults who have lived on the island for their entire lives, say the flooding is annoying.

"It gets boring fast, it gets old," said Craig Buck regarding the flooding and walking to and from the island.

"I used to think it was exciting when I was a kid, and when we used to have to take a canoe to school, but now it's just kind of annoying," said Courtney Buck. "I think they should just fix the road...and it wouldn't be such an issue."

The near-kilometre stretch in the flood plain leading to the island has been the focal point of a controversial decision in 2015 by the province to deny any government-run shuttle service or funding for a private vessel in the event of flooding.

Located about 32 kilometres northeast of Saint John, Darlings Island has about 300 homes.

Marc André Chiasson, communications officer for the Department of the Environment and Local Government, has indicated that the department has worked with the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO), Ambulance New Brunswick, RCMP and fire services for contingency plans in case of a road closure. Robert Dugay, director of communication with the EMO said the EMO had not been notified of any emergencies on the island, and that heavy rains are to blame for the flood. Calls made to

the Nauwigewauk Fire Department were not returned by press time, however, a firetruck was put onto the island as a precaution.

Claude Côté, a Fredericton-based warning preparedness meteorologist for Environment and Climate Change Canada, said the Saint John area will be experiencing unsettled conditions during the next few days.

"There will be showers on and off, and that's for today, tonight, and also the next couple of days," Côté said. He added temperatures are expected to drop a few degrees cooler than normal. Côté said less than 10 millimetres of rain per day is expected.

Lynn Browne, who has lived on the island for 37 years, decided to stay with a friend off the island instead of walking across the flooded area. She says it is easier this time over previous floods because she is now retired, with no children or pets.

"This time I only have one car and I kept it out because there are functions that I want to attend," she said. "It's an inconvenience... up until yesterday I could probably have walked through, I might even be able to today, but...I would never want to do it in the dark."

Paul Thompson and Lynn Irene Watters, purposely built their home with the flooding in mind. They have lived in their house near the road closure for a year, but have designed and built their home slowly over the last 12 years.

"The water is only here for a couple of weeks and it's bad, and then it's gone. We did everything with Mother Nature in mind," said Thompson. "We're nine feet up, downstairs there's a garage, and everything in there is up three inches, everything slopes to the road, and we're seven inches above the road. We put a lot of planning into it."

- with files from Nadine Yousif

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I bet now that this road gets the Royal treatment with a year and a half before the next election! This is an embarrassment for both the Cons and the Liberals, time to fix the #Embarrassement once and for all. Time has come and past for those tax payers of Darlings Island!

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That's ridiculous that these taxpayers have no way in or out to their homes. I bet it would be a different story if this were up the North Shore!

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