

Canada's Quebec expects thousands more to flee wildfires

June 7 2023



A firefighter sprays the ground as a water bomber flies by to dump a load of water on the fire, in Barrington Lake, Canada.

Canada's Quebec province, now the epicenter of a devastating wildfire season that has ravaged the country, expects thousands more people to be forced to flee advancing fires, its leader said Wednesday.

More than 11,000 locals have already been evacuated—about half the Canadian total—and they were expected to be joined by another 4,000 residents by the end of the day.

The province, which is struggling to put out 150 fires, most of them listed as out of control, is hoping for rain to provide some relief.

But Quebec Premier Francois Legault lamented that no significant rain is forecast before Monday evening.

"This means that over the next five, six days, we cannot expect much" in terms of relief or the lifting of evacuation orders, he told a news conference.

Those orders are to stay in place until at least the start of next week, Legault added.

Quebec has deployed hundreds of firefighters. With help coming from abroad, including about 100 firefighters from France scheduled to land on Friday, the province hopes to boost that number to 1,200 in the coming days.

"With the current hands, we can fight about 40 fires at a time," said Legault.

"The more time goes on, the more challenges there will be in regards to water bomber pilots and mechanics," he said.



Canada is facing a catastrophic spring wildfire season with blazes in all corners of the country.

According to the premier, "there is currently no shortage of pilots, but after a week there will indeed be challenges."

The French-speaking Canadian [province](#) has recorded 438 wildfires since the beginning of the year, more than double the average over the past decade for the same period.

The amount of forests burned is also up significantly over past years.

Canada has been hit repeatedly by [extreme weather](#) in recent years, the intensity and frequency of which have increased due to [global warming](#).

Smoke from the Quebec fires has spread far and wide, choking the capital Ottawa, and prompting air quality alerts in Toronto and in several US cities, including New York where the Manhattan skyline was barely visible from other boroughs.

In Washington, an acrid smell lingered in the air and the skies were darkened by the pollution.

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