

Canadian wildfires kill 2 and force over 33,000 to evacuate so far

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The ongoing 2025 Canadian wildfire season has erupted into a devastating crisis that underscores the inability of capitalist governments to protect working people from the worsening impacts of climate change. At least 33,400 people have been forced to evacuate their homes across three provinces, with two residents confirmed dead in the small town of Lac du Bonnet, northeast of Winnipeg, marking the first civilian casualties from wildfires in Manitoba's recent history.

The scale of destruction continues to mount as hundreds of structures have been destroyed and toxic smoke now blankets vast swathes of North America, creating a public health emergency that extends from the Canadian prairies to the eastern United States.

The wildfire season, which typically doesn't reach peak intensity until midsummer, began with unprecedented ferocity in mid-May 2025, with over 160 wildfires active across the country. By early June, more than 200 fires were reported nationwide, with half labeled as out of control.

The most severe blazes have concentrated in the prairie provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, where hot, dry conditions and powerful winds have created a perfect storm for rapid fire spread. In Saskatchewan alone, the massive Shoe fire has scorched more than 400,000 hectares—an area roughly 18 times the size of Saskatoon—while threatening over a dozen communities.

The Shoe fire reached 300,000 hectares before destroying dozens of cabins around East Trout Lake, and the Pisew fire has grown to over 140,000 hectares, forcing the evacuation of communities within a 20-kilometer radius of La Ronge. Residents of La Ronge described fleeing through walls of flame, with one family recounting how they barely escaped their neighborhood as embers rained down on their pickup truck, clutching only a handful of belongings as their home vanished behind a curtain of smoke.

The human toll continues to worsen. In northern Alberta's Chipewyan Lake, 27 structures, including a health center and water treatment plant, were destroyed by wildfire.

The devastation in Saskatchewan has been particularly

severe, with fires destroying over 400 structures and displacing an estimated 15,000 people across approximately 30 communities. The historic Robertson Trading Post in La Ronge, which housed hundreds of indigenous artifacts, was consumed by flames, representing an irreplaceable cultural loss.

Manitoba has seen over 17,000 people evacuated, many from the city of Flin Flon, where residents were given mere hours to abandon their homes. Alberta has ordered more than 1,400 residents to leave their homes, with many reporting that emergency alerts arrived too late to salvage possessions or secure properties.

The response from capitalist politicians at all levels of government has followed the predictable pattern of declaring emergencies while offering wholly inadequate resources to address the crisis.

Officials in Manitoba and Saskatchewan declared provincial states of emergency on May 28 and 29 respectively, with premiers calling for federal assistance. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney convened the Incident Response Group, announcing the deployment of Canadian Armed Forces personnel to assist with evacuations and promising federal support through the Red Cross. However, these band-aid measures cannot address the underlying systemic causes driving the climate catastrophe.

The evacuation process itself has exposed the brutal inadequacy of Canada's social infrastructure under capitalism. Hotel rooms in major cities quickly filled to capacity, forcing authorities to open public buildings and establish evacuation centers as far south as Winkler, just 20 kilometers from the US border. In Cross Lake, evacuees were crammed into school gymnasiums with limited access to medical care, while in Flin Flon families waited hours in line for emergency vouchers at a local community center.

Wildfire smoke has already spread across vast swathes of North America, creating conditions reminiscent of the catastrophic 2023 fire season when toxic smoke choked cities from coast to coast. More than 115 million people across the eastern United States and Canada were placed

under air quality warnings as dense smoke drifted thousands of kilometers from the fire zones.

The smoke from this year's ongoing wildfires has already reached major metropolitan areas, including New York City, where air quality warnings were issued, and has been detected as far away as Europe through satellite imagery. In the Upper Midwest, states including Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio have experienced degraded air quality, with North Dakota and portions of Montana, Minnesota and South Dakota reporting "unhealthy" air quality levels.

The primary health threat comes from fine particulate matter known as PM2.5, microscopic particles that penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, causing inflammation and a cascade of health problems. The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) warns that these particles, invisible to the naked eye, can trigger bronchitis, worsen asthma, and cause numerous other health complications even with short-term exposure.

The most vulnerable populations—including elderly individuals, young children, pregnant women, and those with chronic conditions such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, heart disease, or diabetes—face heightened risks of severe health impacts. Common symptoms include irritation manifesting as runny nose, itchy eyes, mild coughing, and headaches, but exposure can escalate to more serious complications including shortness of breath, dizziness, heart palpitations, and respiratory infections.

Recent research has linked wildfire smoke exposure during pregnancy to adverse birth outcomes, including low birth weight and increased susceptibility to ear and respiratory infections in infants. In extreme cases, prolonged exposure can lead to stroke, heart attack and premature death, underscoring the deadly nature of this environmental crisis.

The 2025 wildfire season represents a continuation and intensification of the climate catastrophe that has ravaged Canada and the entire globe in recent years. The 2023 Canadian wildfires were the most destructive in recorded history, burning over 15 million hectares and choking much of North America with dangerous smoke for months.

The 2024 season, while less severe than 2023, still saw over 5.3 million hectares incinerated, making it the worst year of the century outside of 2023. This year's fires have already burned close to 2.2 million hectares, running at least three times the ten-year average for this time of year, with summer still weeks away.

The root cause of this escalating crisis lies in the private ownership of the means of production, which empowers the capitalist class to plunder the planet's resources for profit regardless of the consequences for humanity.

The corporate-financial oligarchy which runs society has knowingly accelerated climate change through its unbridled energy production, deforestation and industrial practices, all while suppressing sustainable alternatives that threaten its profit margins. The capitalist state functions as an instrument of the ruling class, allocating resources not for fire prevention or to resolve climate change, but for corporate bailouts and imperialist war.

The international dimension of the crisis further exposes the bankruptcy of the nation-state system under capitalism. While smoke travels freely across borders, affecting populations from Canada to the United States to Europe, the response remains fragmented along national lines. The deployment of a mere 150 US firefighters and equipment by the US Forest Service represents a token gesture that pales in comparison to the scale of international cooperation required to address this emergency.

Only through the establishment of a world socialist society can humanity develop the rational planning and international coordination necessary to confront the climate crisis. Under socialism, the vast resources currently devoted to military spending and corporate enrichment could be redirected toward massive investments in renewable energy, forest management, firefighting capabilities and climate adaptation measures.

A socialist approach would prioritize the protection of working people, ensuring adequate housing, healthcare and emergency resources for all. It would involve the democratic planning of economic activity to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels while providing retraining and support for workers in affected industries.

Most fundamentally, it would eliminate the profit motive that drives environmental destruction and replace it with a system oriented toward the long-term sustainability of human civilization and the natural world.

The ongoing Canadian wildfire crisis serves as yet another urgent reminder that the climate emergency cannot be resolved within the framework of capitalism. As toxic smoke continues to choke millions of people and entire communities face destruction, the need for revolutionary change becomes ever more apparent. The working class in Canada, the United States and internationally must unite to overthrow this outmoded social system and rebuild society on socialist foundations.



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