



Climate Resilience and Wildfire: A Look North

House Committee on Environment and Energy

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Executive Summary

This summer's smoky skies in Vermont were due to unprecedented forest fires in Canada, specifically in northern Quebec. In the summer of 2023, more than 45 million acres burned across Canada, including 12.8 million acres in Quebec alone, the most of any province. The links between these wildfires and climate change are many: 1) May to June 2023 was the hottest two month period in Canada on record; 2) the fires released an estimated 2 billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere; and 3) the boreal forest, where these fires took place, is critical in the fight against climate change, holding more than 700 gigatons of carbon in its trees and soil. In Quebec, the wildfires burned on James Bay Cree First Nation territory, which has been heavily logged for several decades, making the land more susceptible to wildfire. Cultural loss, land use and land cover change, natural resource development, and climate change are all at play with these immense wildfires. As Vermont looks to build towards climate resilience, wildfires will continue to be part of the reality each summer and should also be seen as part of an ecologically sustainable future.

Considerations

1. **Air quality preparedness.** What resources (ie air quality indices) do Vermonters need to be prepared for future smoky summers?
2. **Natural resources.** Where are our natural resources, like energy and wood, coming from? How can we support sustainable natural resource development in Vermont?
3. **Fire management plans.** Are our town/state/national forest fire management plans updated, ready, and proactive?
4. **Stewardship of landscapes and communities.** How can we conserve and strengthen our forests and working landscapes? What do Vermont's land stewards need?

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