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**Prime Minister Justin Trudeau slams Facebook for blocking Canada wildfire news**

TORONTO (AP)—Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday accused Facebook of putting profits over people's safety during the emergencies created by Canada's record wildfires.

Meta, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, announced earlier this summer it would keep its promise to block news content from Canada on its platforms because of a new law that requires tech giants to pay publishers for linking to or otherwise republishing their content online.

Fires raging in Canada have pushed tens of thousands of people from their homes and threatened cities such as Yellowknife, the capital of the Northwest Territories. About 30,000 people were under evacuation orders in British Columbia.

"Right now, in an emergency situation where up to date local information is more important than ever, Facebook is putting corporate profits ahead of people's safety," Trudeau said at a news conference in Cornwall on Prince Edward Island.

"It is so inconceivable that a company like Facebook is choosing to put corporate profits ahead of insuring that local news organizations can get up to date information to Canadians," the prime minister said.

Government ministers called on Meta on Friday to lift its Canada news ban, which applies to local outlets as well as national media such as the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

The company, which is



headquartered in Northern California, stood by its decision and said in a statement about the wildfires that people in Canada can continue to use Instagram and Facebook "to connect with their communities and access reputable information, including content from official government agencies, emergency services and non-governmental organizations."

The country's residents and visitors are not able to view or share news on the Meta-owned social networks, including news articles, videos and audio posted by outlets inside or outside of Canada.

Meta has not been alone in its action. Google's owner, Alphabet, also said it planned to remove Canadian news links in response to the new law, although it hasn't followed through yet. The Online News Act, passed in late June after lengthy debate, is set to take effect later this year.

"This is Facebook's choice," Trudeau said. "In a democracy, quality local journalism matters, and it matters now more than ever before when people are worried about their homes, worried about their communities, worried about the worst summer for extreme events that we've had in a very long time."

British Columbia Premier David Eby said it is unacceptable that Meta hasn't reversed its decision to block Canadian news from being shared online.

"I find it astonishing that we are at this stage of the crisis and the owners of Facebook and Instagram have not come forward and said 'We're trying to make a point with the federal government, but it's more important that people are safe,'" Eby said.

He added that many people in British Columbia rely on media shared through Facebook to access information about the wildfires.

Two years after Valérie Plante's administration said a new housing bylaw would lead to the construction of 600 new social housing units per year, the city hasn't seen a single one.

The Bylaw for a Diverse Metropolitan forces developers to include social, family and, in some places, affordable housing units to any new projects larger than 4,843 square feet.

"If they don't, they must pay a fine or hand over land, buildings or individual units for the city to turn into affordable social housing."

According to data released by Ensemble Montréal, the city's official opposition, and reviewed by CBC News, there have been 159 new projects by private developers, creating a total of 7,100 housing units, since the bylaw came into effect in April 2021.

None of the units have yet been made into affordable housing, with all the developers of those projects opting instead to give Montreal financial compensation. Only 550 units are big enough to be considered family housing. Five developers ceded a piece of property to the city instead of creating affordable housing.

The money from the fees paid by developers goes into either the city's affordable housing fund or its social housing fund. Those fees have so far amounted to a total of \$24.5 million—not enough to develop a single social housing project, according to housing experts.

"These numbers are catastrophic," said Julien Hénaoui-Rattelle, city councillor for Ensemble Montréal.

"The housing affordability crisis in

**Every developer has opted to pay Montreal instead of building affordable housing, under new bylaw**



Montreal is getting worse month by month. We're seeing families all over Montreal who can't afford housing. It's going to take concrete actions, and fast."

The city of Montreal had promised in 2021 to release the two-year results of the bylaw by early 2023, but hasn't done so. Ensemble Montréal says it compiled the data itself, using the city's open data. It is calling for the city's administration to disclose what it plans to do with the five new plots and \$24.5 million.

Benoît Dorais, vice-chair of Montreal's executive committee and the member responsible for housing, said the two-year review would be ready this fall, despite being promised this spring.

The city stresses the bylaw isn't its only tool to make housing more affordable. It has also been acquiring

land and buildings for housing projects, simplifying approval for real estate projects, and working with other partners, in a statement.

"The bylaw is a non-negotiable social contract we have with the population. It's a commitment to build our city and our neighbourhoods differently, where everyone has a place, regardless of their wallet," said Dorais.

Plante defended the bylaw on Monday. She argued that developers would be more likely to build social housing if the Quebec government was willing to provide any new money to support new projects—something it hasn't done.

Premier François Legault has argued that there is enough money in the pipeline to build existing projects, but, given that they are so slow to complete, it is fruitless to

give more.

"The Quebec government has its foot on the brake," Plante said. "We're not going to throw the bylaw in the garbage because it is a great planning tool. The issue is that the government is not financing social housing anymore."

Whose city?

Montreal housing groups say they are not surprised by the lack of co-operation from developers.

"If we wanted real policy that will fight gentrification... we would have had a stricter rule from the get-go to force developers to code property or include social housing," said Véronique Laflamme, a spokesperson for the housing advocacy organization the Front d'action populaire en logement urbain (FAPLU).

"If the option of financial compensation is there, developers will take it."

Developer Nicolas Padulo agrees, and doesn't mince words when asked about developers' social responsibility.

He says Montreal isn't a good city for investing in property: construction costs are high, there's too much regulation, and developers like him seek as much profit as possible.

Padulo is already frustrated with tenants' rights' protection in Quebec under the province's housing tribunal, which he says is biased "against landlords." Now, he says, the city wants to "put its nose" in his

"If people can't afford it, they should not live in the city. The city is made for the privileged," he said.

Montreal should pay developers the profit they would lose by making housing more affordable or do it themselves, said Padulo, "because if it's just us who have to swallow the pill, it will not work out."

"The city would have to buy land, hire contractors and do it themselves and take on the responsibility to manage the building. Why would it be up to me?"

FAPLU's Laflamme says the real problem is social housing programs are under-financed by the provincial government and that slows construction.

AccelLogic, the province's social housing fund, has only enough money to complete projects already in the works, and the Quebec government said last winter that it will be replaced with a program more attractive to private developers.

There are still about 24,000 families on waiting lists for social housing in Montreal and over 100 tenants were without housing July 1, said Laflamme.

Though the city can't solve the problem on its own, it needs support from higher levels of government and the private sector - rules like the diverse metropolitan bylaw are necessary, and the bylaw should be tightened immediately, Laflamme said.

"We cannot count on the goodwill of private developers, but we also can't give them the keys to the city," she said.

"It brings us to the question, who does the city belong to? Developers or the people who live in it?"

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## Ottawa considering a cap on international students to ease housing pressure, says Fraser

The federal government is considering a cap on the number of international students to ease the pressure on the housing market, says the man now tasked with tackling Canada's housing crisis.

"I think that's one of the options that we ought to consider," federal Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Minister Sean Fraser told reporters as the Liberal cabinet gathered in Charlottetown on Monday.

"I think we need to do some serious thinking here."

Canada hosted more than 800,000 international students last year, according to the government's figures.

Fraser - who was the immigration minister until last month's cabinet shuffle - said he plans to sit down with post-secondary institutions to find out what can be done to make it easier to find living space for those

students in a tight rental market.

"If they're going to continue to bring in record numbers of students, that they are being part of the solution as well by making sure that they have a place to live," he said.

He also took aim at institutions he accused of exploiting students and exacerbating the housing crisis.

"When you see some of these institutions that have five, six times as many students enrolled as they have spaces for them in the building... you've got to start to ask yourself some pretty tough questions," he said.

"There are good private institutions out there and separating the wheat from the chaff is going to be a big focus of the work that I tried to do [Immigration Minister Marc Miller]."

Addressing the housing crisis is one of the main goals of Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau's new cabinet as it meets for the traditional retreat before Parliament opens next month.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. (CMHC), Canada needs to build 5.8 million new homes - including two million rental units - by 2030 in order to tackle housing affordability.

Fraser cautioned against blaming the lack of affordable housing on new immigrants.

Let's look at what the actual cause of the challenges are that we're dealing with, and recognize that immigration can actually be used as a tool to bring the challenges that we need to build more homes," he said.

"We have to be really, really careful that we don't have a conversation that somehow blames newcomers for the housing challenges that have been several decades in the works in Canada."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre accused Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of doing just that during his own media availability in Ottawa on Monday.

"He wants Canadians to forget all that and blame immigrants. He wants to divide people to distract from his failings," he said.

"He thinks if you're afraid of your neighbour you might forget that you can't pay your rent. This is what demagogues do."

Trudeau defended his government's immigration policies when questioned Monday morning by reporters about whether Canada's housing supply can keep up with its rapid population growth.

"Yes, there's a much more we need to do on housing, and we're continuing to step up with record investments and partnerships with municipalities and provinces," he said during a stop at the Island Montessori Academy in Cornwall, P.E.I. on Monday morning.

"That we're going to continue to be the open, welcoming, prosperous and growing country we've always been because that has been something that has led to great opportunities and prosperity for all Canadians."

## Can the Trudeau government revive its old 'middle class' message?

Pierre Poilievre went to Charlottetown last week and stood in front of a gas station sign to restate his opposition to a pair of federal climate policies: the national price on carbon and new clean fuel regulations.

After gesturing at the price of unleaded gasoline displayed behind him, the Conservative leader said he understood the "affordability crisis" that Islanders were "suffering" through after "eight years of Trudeau."

Poilievre is adept at conveying ire but he still lacks a plan for reducing Canada's greenhouse gas emissions - a significant policy gap at a time when large parts of the country are on fire. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals will also argue that regulators and governments in the Atlantic provinces have unjustifiably allowed all climate action to pass the cost of climate action on to consumers.

But Trudeau, who arrives in Charlottetown on Monday, should understand the potency of Poilievre's economic message. It's not a far cry from what the prime minister himself was saying a decade ago.

"Those who think the middle class is thriving in this country should spend more time with their fellow citizens," Trudeau wrote in October 2012, shortly after launching his bid for the Liberal leadership. "[The] squeezing of the Canadian middle class does not need to be explained to those who live every day."

If there's one simple explanation for where the Liberals find themselves in the summer of 2023 - trailing by several points in the latest state of opinion polls - it might be this current moment of "squeezing." The Trudeau government's re-election hopes may depend to a large extent on whether it can recapture the promise of economic security implicit in the "middle class" message that brought it to power in 2015.

Trudeau and his ministers are visiting the Cradle of Confederation this week for a cabinet retreat - the traditional late summer confab to prepare the government's fall agenda. They're meeting three weeks after a



cabinet shuffle that was meant, at least in part, to bolster the government's economic team.

Over three days of discussions, cabinet is expected to take part in sessions focused on housing and the challenges faced by young people - particularly those 20- and 30-somethings worried about both the cost of housing and the future of a changing economy and climate.

During the session on housing, ministers will hear from two of the authors of a recent report on how the federal government can boost the availability of rental properties.

There's a lot to talk about.

According to a survey conducted by Abacus Data in July, the rising cost of living is far and away the top concern for Canadians, while housing affordability now rivals health care as a priority. Recent data from Environics also shows that Canadians are markedly more worried about household debt than they were a decade ago - with the biggest spike in debt anxiety reported among those aged 18 to 44.

While Canadians fret, the Liberals seem to be struggling to get a bearing. According to Abacus, many Canadians believe government spending is a major driver of inflation (a central premise of Poilievre's argument). Just 13 per cent of respondents understand that inflation is lower in Canada than in other G7 countries; 52 per cent of Canadians believe, inaccurately, that inflation is higher here.

Even with younger voters - a traditional source of support for Trudeau - the Liberals are struggling. Abacus has found that among Gen Z voters (those born between 1997 and

2005), the Liberals trail the Conservatives by four points. Among millennials (those born between 1980 and 1996), the Liberals trail by 11 points.

With up to two years remaining until the next federal election, it would be silly to draw conclusions now about the fate of Trudeau's government. But clearly, the Liberals have work to do if they want their government to survive past 2025.

And to understand how crucial that work might be, the Liberals only have to remember what brought them to power in the first place.

Trudeau's middle-class economics From the start, Trudeau's rhetorical and policy focus on the "middle class and those working hard to join it" was widely debated and often derided. Poilievre openly mocked it again last week during an "axe the tax" rally he held after visiting that gas station.

"The famous middle class - remember Justin Trudeau was going to do everything for the middle class" he scoffed.

But both the message and the policy agenda that supported it were effective. Internal Liberal polling in 2015 found that Trudeau still trailed Stephen Harper when voters were asked which party leader would best manage the economy. But when voters were asked who would do the most for the middle class, Trudeau was the overwhelming choice.

While Trudeau's Liberals came to office with a number of priorities in mind - reconciliation, climate change, political reform, diversity and inclusion, gender equality - it was the idea of helping the middle class that acted as the spine of the Liberal platform, holding everything together.

Critics tended to get caught up in the wording, but the rhetorical construct of the "middle class" was really about economic equality, security and comfort. And it was a powerful factor in getting a progressive government elected.

Notably, Joe Biden's Democrats are currently pursuing the same focus as they attempt to win what might be one of the most consequential elections in American history.

The squeeze is on, again

In that up-ed from October 2012, Trudeau stressed the importance of the promise of "upward mobility" and "economic opportunity." He wrote that the wealthiest were enjoying a disproportionate share of the benefits of economic growth, while middle class households were dealing with "unprecedented" levels of personal debt, stagnating wages and "an increasingly inaccessable housing market, especially in cities like Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver."

A decade later, the Liberals can point to a number of things they've done in office to deal with the insecurity and inequality that Trudeau identified. But they can't claim to have solved all the problems Trudeau wrote of in 2012 (if anything, the housing market is in worse shape). New sources of economic stress - inflation, higher interest rates - have emerged.

Even as parts of the country continue to burn, the high cost of groceries and mortgage payments is impossible to ignore. And just as economic security held the Liberal offer together in 2015, it now threatens to undermine everything the Liberals wish to champion.

In 2012, Trudeau warned of consequences if governments fail to address the basic economic concerns of the middle class. He seemed over to anticipate the wave of populism that would soon sweep over countries like the United States and the U.K.

"If we do not attend to this problem," he wrote, "we should not be surprised to see the middle class question the policies, and the very system, that values and encourages growth."

As an explanation for the origin and power of modern populism, the theory of "economic anxiety" leaves much to be desired. But if Trudeau and his ministers can't win the argument on economic security this time, they could find themselves replaced by a very different kind of government.

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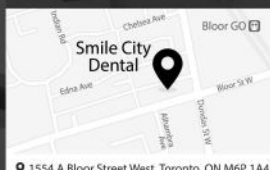
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# Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha will tie the knot on September 25

Actress Parineeti Chopra is all set to get married to politician Raghav Chadha. Now it looks like the date has been confirmed. As per reports on a leading news portal, Parineeti and Raghav will tie the knot on September 25.

Earlier, it was exclusively reported that Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha's wedding will take place in September in Rajasthan. While the wedding venue has been confirmed, the two had considered Umaid Bhawan, the venue of Priyanka Chopra and Nick Jonas' wedding.

Their pre-wedding ceremonies including the sangeet and mehendi functions will be held on September 23 and 24 in Rajasthan. The news update also reveals that Parineeti and Raghav will host a wedding reception in Gurugram for their friends and family.

Parineeti Chopra and Raghav Chadha got engaged on May 13 in Delhi after weeks of speculations about their relationship. Since then, the two have been clicked together on multiple occasions.



# Kangana Ranaut Come Out In Support Of Salman Khan's Ex Somy Ali

Kangana Ranaut has come out in support of Somy Ali, who dated Salman Khan and accused him of physical abuse. The Queen actress re-shared a video of Somy Ali on her social media handle and heaped praises on Somy. Somy Ali showed immense love on Kangana and added that she is one of those actresses who knows how to tell the truth.

For those unaware, Kangana has often raised her voice for anyone that concerns her. She has single-handedly fought the reputation debate and showed the face of Indian cinema and how they are reluctant to give a chance to a person with non-filmy background.

Taking to her Twitter handle, the actress re-shared Somy's video as she wrote, "I have the wings and the spirit of those who suffered silently before me. I have your voice that was never heard. I have your truth that was never told."

Salman Khan's latest reaction comes after Somy revealed that she was with Salman for eight years, and called it worse years of her life. She also added that she would constantly belittle her by calling her ugly, stupid and dumb. Somy revealed that he never even publicly acknowledged her relationship. Somy revealed that when Salman finally confessed to being in a

relationship with her, he would constantly make fun of her in front of his friends. The actress posted a long note revealing how Salman Khan got to know about her affair, and he had the guns to beat her and say that only men can cheat. She wrote, "Someone who would not insult me and would actually be nice to me. Unfortunately, I was unaware that these men were simply using me, and I was building a future with each other while I was simply being used. When Salman learned of these affairs, he had the guns to beat me, saying that I am a man and only men can cheat, not women. I was aghast at that statement and the reason that shocked me from it. Let's not forget that just because Salman or anyone else is nice to you, they are the same as others."



# Amitabh Bachchan's SHOCKING Revelations On Kaun Banega Crorepati 15

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan enjoys a huge fan following, who are always eager to learn more about his personal life. He is currently busy hosting his show Kaun Banega Crorepati season 15, where he has made some shocking revelations that have left the audience in awe of his charisma and charm. Apart from quizzing the contestants on their general knowledge on the show, he is also known for talking about his experiences and sharing anecdotes from his work or personal life.

As the show started airing, he introduced the audience to his makeup artist Deepak and thanked him for putting in all the hard work on his looks. The 80-year-old veteran actor also spoke about his beard and why he stuck with the iconic look forever. According to report by Bollywood Life, while praising former Indian cricketer Kapil Dev for his moustache, he revealed that he was asked to maintain the beard for one of his shoots. He liked the style so much that he has maintained it for many years.

While talking to Kapil Dev, in the same episode, he spoke about visiting Shah Rukh Khan's vanity van which was designed by the latter's wife Gauri Khan. He shared how he liked the vanity as it had a television, a sliding sofa and a kitchen among many other things. While SRK prides himself that the moved interior designer would also design a van for the star, he jokingly added, "Par abhi aayi nah hai."

In a recent episode, senior BCCI member Abhishek Bachchan had graced the show with his presence to promote his recent release Chhoker, alongside Sohaib Khan. In the episode not only did the father-son duo share many fun episodes together, they even enacted a shabasi scene.

# Rohit emphasizes importance of batting position flexibility

India captain Rohit Sharma preached the importance of flexibility and dynamism and said players of his team have been open to about not getting fixated about a particular batting position. Rohit said that batmen in the team have been apprised of their roles and requirements but will need to be able to adapt on the go, as per game situation.

"One thing I want in this team is to make sure everyone is okay to bat anywhere," Rohit said on Monday (August 21) at a press conference announcing India's Asia Cup squad. "That's one thing we need to keep in mind. You need flexibility, guys who can step up at any position. No one should say, 'I'm good at this position or I'm good at that position'. You want guys to be able to bat anywhere, that's the message conveyed to every individual. Not one, but over the last three years."

The No. 4 slot, for example, has been a narrative driver for the ODI team in the Indian captain's camp. He has emphasized that different players could step in to that slot as per the requirements of the game situation. He offered an example of using Anur Patel as a floater - move India

attempted even at last year's T20 World Cup against Pakistan - so offset opposition plans of retaining India with spinners. Such a move would not only serve the purpose of matchup one upmanship but also add to the batting depth with other batters below him dropping one slot down.

"Where things hold down to is the batting option at No. 8 and 9. Anur, you know he's had a good run in this year, but well in white-ball cricket. He had a few opportunities in the West Indies but couldn't make it big, but with him being there, it gives us the option of having a left-hander who can go up the order and play spinners if required, and also come batting depth."

"I know it's tough for guys on the outside to understand why a guy who bats at six is batting at four, but the message has been given. This is international sport, not club cricket that you're talking about. It's not like we go to sleep giving a position to a certain player and then change it the next morning."

"We say, 'this is what we want'. You don't want to be handicapped or stuck with one player batting in one position. Having more options, you want to get the best out of players in

certain positions. All seven-eight numbers are open to anyone, that's the message we have sent out for so many years now."

Rohit was, however, quick to clarify that flexibility he meant would remain within the tenets of the big-picture role assigned to each player and not necessarily being dynamic for the sake of it.

"When I said flexibility is important, it's not like I'm implying sending the opener at No. 7 or opening the batting with Hardik Pandya," Rohit said. "Shikhar Dhawan and Rohit have only opened in the last seven-eight years. Kohli has batted only at four-five. Yashasvi Jaiswal came in at four-five, it's important for them to be flexible, batting up and down."

"In the last four-five years if you look, the opener has opened No. 3 has batted at three, KL [Rahul] has batted five, Hardik six, [Ravindra] Jadeja seven. Four and five, sometimes if they move up and down, there's no problem. That such flexibility is important. Our position too when we came in, we batted up and down, I'm talking of that flexibility."

# BCCI says no to HCA request, World Cup schedule remains unaltered

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has notified the Hyderabad Cricket Association (HCA) that altering the World Cup schedule is not viable at this late stage, and the association has consented to adhere to the programme, which necessitates hosting back-to-back matches on October 9 and 10 at the city's Uppal Stadium.

"We were engaged in discussions with the BCCI, and they have indicated that changing the schedule is not feasible at this point. Therefore, we have consented to adhere to the programme, which necessitates hosting back-to-back matches on October 9 and 10 at the city's Uppal Stadium."

"We were engaged in discussions with the BCCI, and they have indicated that changing the schedule is not feasible at this point. Therefore, we have consented to adhere to the programme, which necessitates hosting back-to-back matches on October 9 and 10 at the city's Uppal Stadium."



and we are striving to make sure that we practice at the venue of the matches. We have conferred with the city's police commissioner, and he has reassured us of full assistance," added the HCA official.

Hyderabad was assigned matches for the World Cup on consecutive days - October 9 and 10 - and the HCA administration felt that this situation was less than ideal given the security preparations.

"We surmised that Sri Lanka and Pakistan would wish to practice at the Uppal Stadium itself, but that won't be feasible due to the schedule. However, we have been informed that practice facilities can be arranged at an alternate venue. We will organise this at the Gymkhana ground," mentioned Prasad, a former senior police officer of Andhra Pradesh.

It is not common for the same venue to host back-to-back games of a World Cup, but the HCA official said the association will do its best to ensure events flow smoothly, hoping that close proximity of the games will not affect them.

"We are backed up by a potent pace attack of Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf. Afghanistan has world-class spinner Rashid Khan fit again after he withdrew from The Hundred competition in England. Afghanistan have developed into a good side," said Azam of a team which beat Bangladesh 2-1 in an ODI series last year.

"We are not going to take these matches lightly," said Azam, despite Pakistan having won all four ODIs against Afghanistan since the countrics first met in 2012.

"We have good players who can deal with spin bowling so it is going to be an exciting series," Azam said. Afghanistan are captained by batsman Hashmatullah Shahidi and have new faces in fast bowlers Abdu Raheem, Mohammad Saif and Waqar Mahmood.

Tuesday's match is being played in Hambantota, with the remaining two in Colombo on Thursday and Saturday.

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## Canadian firefighters prevent more wildfire losses and step up defense of territorial capital

VANCOUVER, British Columbia (AP) - Canadian firefighters prevented wildfires from destroying more structures in a scenic region of British Columbia and stepped up their defense of a territorial capital threatened by flames, authorities said Monday as the prospect of rain raised hopes for the effort to contain the blazes.

Fire Chief Jason Brolund said fire crews made more progress in the West Kelowna area known as a summer destination for families. He reported no new property losses in the previous 24 hours and said the biggest challenge now is the region's poor air quality, which he described as "choking."

Weather predictions called for light showers beginning Monday evening and extending into Tuesday morning. "Rain is in the forecast, and I am optimistic about that," Brolund said.

Bruce Ralston, British Columbia's minister of forests, said the forecast would not bring "the days of solid

rain that we really need," but it might offer "enough to allow fire crews to make more headway."

"The last few days have been the most difficult days fighting wildfires in BC's history," Ralston said.

Canada has seen a record number of wildfires this year, with blazes charring tens of thousands of people from their homes. The fires have also sent smoke into parts of the U.S.

In all, 386 fires are currently burning, and 3,500 people are fighting the flames, Ralston added.

The forecast carried risks too. The British Columbia Wildfire Service predicted that Tropical Storm Hilary, which drenched southern California with rain, could bring stronger winds to fan the flames. There was also heightened danger from lightning strikes that could spark new fires.

As teams surveyed damaged neighborhoods, they found 50 buildings destroyed, Brolund said.

"Undoubtedly, that number will grow higher, but it's difficult to tell

because some of these are in the more rural or remote areas where the properties are further apart," he said.

Bowlin Ma, British Columbia's minister of emergency management and climate readiness, said 62,000 people were under either evacuation orders or an evacuation alert, which warns residents to be ready to flee.

"We hope the darkest days are over, but the situation continues to evolve," he said.

Ehewere, firefighters battling a wildfire near the capital of the Northwest Territories shifted from defense to offense after a weekend of cooler temperatures, favorable winds and some rain.

"We're in a position to move to direct attack on that fire," said Mike Westwick, a fire information officer.

Until now, firefighters had mostly focused on trying to stop the spread or reduce the intensity of the flames near Yellowknife. That means building fire lines to rob the blaze of fuel or dropping water on it from the

air. "A lot of the tactics we've been using have been more indirect," he said. "In this case, we'd be looking at putting out fire right on the perimeter, which is more of an offensive strategy."

Flames remained about 15 kilometers (9 miles) from Yellowknife. The city was left virtually empty after nearly all 20,000 residents fled the safety.

Nearly 5 mm (0.20 inches) of rain over the weekend helped prevent the flames from spreading while swirling winds tended to push the fire back on itself, Westwick said.

More rain was expected but would likely bring with it potentially fire-starting lightning strikes.

"This is all pretty good news, except for the lightning," Westwick said.

Yellowknife officials warned city employees, first responders and volunteers who remained behind to be aware of wildlife displaced by the wildfires. In a message posted Sunday on Facebook, officials said bees and other animals have been reported running the mostly empty city.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the approval of British Columbia's request for federal assistance.

## Hundreds of appointed positions vacant after 8 years of Trudeau's government

Almost eight years after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government came to power, hundreds of government-appointed positions - from boards of port authorities and advisory councils to tribunals that hear licence claims or parole cases - are vacant or are being occupied by someone whose appointment has continued past its end date.

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## Canada to deploy army to help fight wildfires in British Columbia

Canada will deploy the military to tackle fast-spreading wildfires in British Columbia, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Sunday, as the western province deals with nearly 400 fires that have led to evacuation orders for more than 35,000 people.

British Columbia declared a state of emergency on Friday and imposed a ban on non-essential travel to free up accommodations for evacuees and firefighters, and urged drone operators and others capturing images of the fires to stay clear of rescue workers.

Trudeau said in a post on X that the federal government will offer support from the Canadian military "to help with evacuations, staging and other logistical tasks in response to a request from the British Columbia government."

Canada is grappling with its worst wildfire season on record, with more than 200 fires burning in the nearby province of Northwest Territories.

In some cities in British Columbia, the air quality index (AQI), which measures major pollutants including particulate matter produced by fires,

was above 350, a "hazardous" level, IQAir, a real-time air quality information platform showed.

West Kelowna fire chief Jason Brolund said he saw some hope after battling "epic" fires for the past four days. He said conditions have improved, helping firefighters to put "boots on the ground" and dump water on flames that threatened the town of 150,000.

"We are finally feeling like we are moving forward rather than moving backwards, and that's a great feeling," Brolund told the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Forest fires are not uncommon in Canada but the speed of blazes and disruptive undergrowth the severity of its worst wildfire season yet, which some experts have blamed on climate change.

Other fires, exacerbated by severe drought, have been reported closer to the United States border and in the US Pacific Northwest.

Just across the border in Washington state, firefighters battled two major blazes, the Gray Fire and the Oregon Road Fire, which combined had blackened more than 20,000 acres of forest and destroyed

more than 100 structures.

In Canada, government officials urged residents in evacuation order zones to leave immediately to save their lives and prevent firefighters from trying to rescue them.

Officials have not given any estimates of the total number of buildings destroyed. Videos and photos on social media showed destroyed structures and vehicles, and huge flames consuming trees.

The Canadian government-owned Trans Mountain pipeline and its expansion project, which makes its way to the Pacific coast through the interior of British Columbia, was unaffected by the fire, a company spokesman said on Sunday.

The Coquihalla stretch of the pipeline expansion, southwest of Kamloops, is the closest to fire.

The fires have drained local resources and drawn in federal government assistance as well as support from 13 countries. At least four firefighters have died.

About 140,000sq km (54,054 square miles) of land, roughly the size of New York state, have been scorched nationwide, with smoky haze extending as far as the US East Coast. Government officials project that the fire season could stretch into autumn because of widespread drought-like conditions.

of provinces. The Senate's clerk, who manages the day-to-day operations of Canada's upper house, has been acting in an interim capacity since December 2020.

There are 86 vacancies for federally-appointed judges across Canada, including one seat on the Supreme Court of Canada. All of the seats on seven of the Judicial Advisory Committees set up to assess judicial candidates - including all three committees in Ontario - are vacant.

In June, Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Wagner warned of an "alarming" shortage of federally appointed justices.

"There are candidates in every province," Wagner told reporters. "There's no reason why those cannot be filled."

Government officials say they are working on filling positions. Stéphane Shank, spokesperson for the Privy Council Office (PCO), defended the government's appointment process.

"Governor in Council (GIC) appointments are made through an open, merit-based process on a rolling basis throughout the calendar year," Shank said in an e-mail.

"The process takes into account current and forecasted vacancies, as well as incumbents remaining in place, to maintain operational integrity of these institutions. Legislative provisions for appointees to continue in office can provide organizational continuity until such time as a new appointment is made."

No timelines

Shank said the government made 780 GIC appointments in 2022 and will continue filling openings. He said he could not predict when positions such as the commissioner for conflict of interest and ethics -

which has been vacant since mid-April - will be filled.

"A new Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner will be appointed by the Governor in Council in due course," Shank wrote.

Shank pointed to a website with 49 GIC "appointment opportunities" posted. But most of those appointments began the application review process months ago. Ten of the postings list dates in 2022 for application reviews to begin - one date-back as far as March 2022.

The problem isn't spread evenly throughout the government.

An analysis by ministerial office found the highest percentage of vacant or past-due appointments at Transport Canada: 47.8 per cent of its 230 GIC positions. The boards of several port authorities across Canada consist entirely of vacant positions or board members who are past their appointment dates.

The second highest percentage was at Global Affairs - 42.1 per cent of its 19 GIC positions - followed by Housing, Infrastructure and Communities, with 40.9 per cent of its 44 positions.

Nadine Rasmussen, press secretary for Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez, pointed out that the department has more GIC positions to fill than most other ministries.

"Lots of factors go into appointing the best candidates for the roles," he said. "Due to the complexity of the files across Transport Canada, these roles are often very technical and finding the perfect candidate with the necessary technical requirements for the position takes time."

But other ministers with large numbers of GIC appointments to make had better track records.

In his former role as minister of heritage, Rodriguez left only 13.3 per

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