



NEWS RELEASE

Forest fire activity in Canada down substantially from 1989 peak

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VANCOUVER—Forest fire activity in Canada has been decreasing over the last 30 years, along with the rest of the world, finds a new study released today by the Fraser Institute, an independent, non-partisan Canadian public policy think-tank.

“Contrary to popular misperceptions, forest fire activity in Canada is on the decline over the last three decades, and that is consistent with global fire activity,” said Robert P. Murphy, a senior fellow with the Fraser Institute and author of *Trends in Canadian Forest Fires, 1959-2019*.

The study finds that over the six decades of reliable government data from 1959-2019, the entire period shows a positive trend in the annual number of fires and total hectares burned. However, the first half of this period shows a sharp trend increase while the second half shows a trend decline. In fact, forest fire activity across the nation as a whole was significantly worse in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s, having reached its peak and maximum area burned in 1989.

For example, in 1989, 12,015 number of fires burned some 7.6 million hectares, compared to 4,062 fires burning 1.8 million hectares in 2019.

The six worst years of forest fires in Canada, measured in terms of total area burned, all occurred before the year 2000.

On a regional basis, however, the study does show that British Columbia and the Northwest Territories have experienced record-high fire activity in more recent years.

“It is wrong to say that forest fire activity is on the rise in Canada, as the last 30 years will tell us,” Murphy said.

“Though there are important regional differences to recognize and better understand.”

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