

United States Senate

July 18, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Secretary Burgum and Administrator Zeldin,

As smoke from wildfires in Canada crosses our northern border, threatening public health and the economy across the Midwest and Eastern United States, I write with serious concern regarding the administration's ongoing response and future preparedness. I urge the federal government to develop a comprehensive plan, in collaboration with the Canadian government, to manage this and future cross-border wildfire smoke events as they become more frequent and severe.

Smoke from wildfires in Ontario is actively drifting into the United States, degrading surface-level air quality across multiple states to hazardous and unhealthy levels.¹ Tens of millions of Americans have been placed under air quality advisories from Boston to Milwaukee to Washington, D.C. While the smoke is temporary, the disruption it has created has been substantial. Across affected regions, seniors, young children, and individuals with health conditions have been instructed to stay indoors, public spaces and businesses have closed, and flights have been grounded.²

Despite this ongoing emergency and a growing pattern of large-scale U.S.-Canada wildfire smoke events in recent years, there has been little public coordinated activity from the administration to combat this crisis and no indication that the federal government is working to improve its ability to address future cross-border wildfire smoke incidents. In fact, the central federal message so far has been President Trump's announcement that he will add the cost of wildfire pollution to the tariffs that he wishes to assess on Canada.³

¹ Ittai Sopher, *At Least 14 States Inhaling 'Hazardous' and 'Unhealthy' Air Quality from Canadian Fires*, WCNC (July 17, 2026), <https://www.wcnc.com/article/news/nation-world/states-canadian-wildfires-washington-dc-mid-atlantic/507-a270b473-b6b4-4fd6-81cb-553b3be4bffe>.

² Roxanne Werly, *Wildfire Smoke Prompts Possible Delays, Cancellations at Cherry Capital Airport*, WPBN/WGTU (July 16, 2026), <https://upnorthlive.com/news/local/wildfire-smoke-prompts-possible-delays-cancellations-at-cherry-capital-airport>; Danielle Noyes, *Air Quality Alert Persists in Massachusetts as Wildfire Smoke Expected to Return*, WBUR (July 16, 2026), <https://www.wbur.org/news/2026/07/15/canadian-wildfire-smoke-boston-air-quality>.

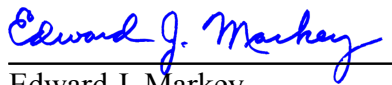
As an initial response, if any requests for assistance have been made by the Government of Canada or its Provincial/Territorial Governments through the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC) to the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC), I urge the federal government to meet those requests and provide the resources necessary to sufficiently mitigate smoke exposure to the United States. I ask that you respond promptly to any of those appeals and update Congress on your response.

Beyond the need for near-term action, I request that you examine the bilateral wildland fire management and air quality infrastructure between Canada and the United States to improve mutual assistance in an era of larger and more severe wildfires. This should include a formal update of the Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement, which has served as an effective cooperative instrument in managing transboundary air pollution. Though originally intended to address acid rain caused by sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, and later ground-level ozone, the agreement does not include PM2.5 that is generated by wildfire smoke. By adding PM2.5 to this agreement, under the direction of the Environmental Protection Agency, the administration would be better able to both encourage action and jointly mitigate the threat.

Like the climate crisis, the wildfire crisis is a shared crisis. It does not respect national boundaries, and our response cannot stop at our border. We must have a federal government that responds to crises effectively and quickly, invests in institutions that can match the evolving scale of climate change and its impacts, and work together with our neighbors – not against them – to ensure our mutual health and wellbeing.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture

³ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (July 17, 2026, 3:24PM), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116936952365066409>.