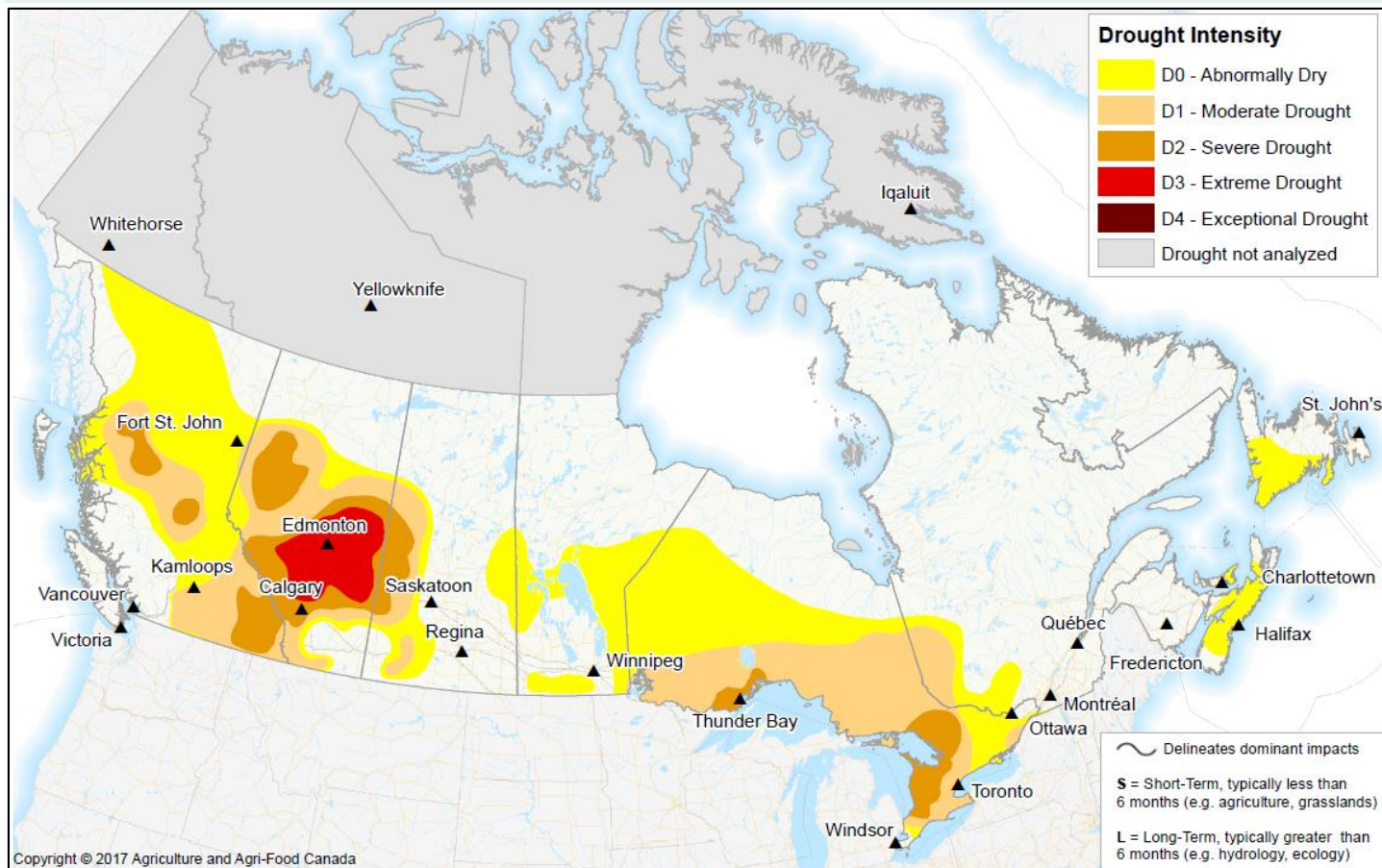


# Canadian Drought Monitor

Conditions as of April 30, 2010



The month of April brought some much needed relief to many of the drought regions in Western Canada. Much of the Prairies received in upwards of 200% of normal precipitation, which helped soil moisture and surface water supplies. Although the long term effects of drought remain from the last growing season, this moisture will definitely help to replenish soil moisture reserves. Significant drought areas remain in the interior of British Columbia, and much of Ontario. As of April 30, 45% of the country (excluding Arctic regions above 60°N) was classified D0 or greater, a decrease of 6% from last month. This represents the first reduction in nearly 6 months. Approximately 60% of Canada's agricultural area was rated D0 or higher relatively consistent with the previous months assessment.

Precipitation: April precipitation was above normal for much of the southern Prairies and below normal for eastern Canada as well as British Columbia. Much of Saskatchewan and eastern



Alberta received more than twice the normal amount of precipitation. Areas that normally receive 20-30 mm, reported between 60-80 mm. The April showers were welcomed throughout this region to replenish dry areas, but much more precipitation is needed to reduce the deficits in the most severe drought areas. Typically the Prairies receive their highest monthly totals during May and June. Eastern Canada remained significantly dry with monthly deficits of 30–60mm. Atlantic Canada is abnormally dry for this time of year experiencing monthly deficits of greater than 70-80mm and 60 day percent of normal below 60%.

Temperature: Average temperatures were near normal or above normal across the country. With the exception of British Columbia, Alberta, and Southwest Saskatchewan which were near normal, all other regions experienced more than 3 degrees above normal monthly temperature. Northern regions including the Arctic and northern Ontario reported more than 5°C (9°F) warmer than normal. The warmer temperatures meant a quicker than normal spring melt in most regions of Canada. Warmer temperatures were a welcome departure from the record breaking cold of last year, which hindered pasture emergence and forced producers to continue feeding livestock much later than normal.

Regional Highlights: After an extremely dry fall and winter, much of Alberta and Saskatchewan received greater than 200% in April receiving approximately 25-50 mm (1-2 in.) above normal precipitation. The moisture was welcome across the drought areas, helping to replenish soil moisture and surface water supplies across eastern Alberta and western Saskatchewan. However, effects of a prolonged drought still remain, with hay and pasture lands recovering from prolonged drought stress. In many areas, sub-surface soil moisture is low and still in need of significant precipitation. Alberta specifically has been experiencing one of its driest years (April 2009-10) on record. If the situation doesn't improve, increased fire risk and severe water restrictions could result. Therefore, the drought classifications remained relatively unchanged from last month, with a D3 (Extreme Drought) across central Alberta, and a D2 (Moderate Drought) extending into Saskatchewan.

Unlike the rest of the Prairies, the Peace River region in northwest Alberta remained exceptionally dry through April. While many places on the Prairies received 200% of normal or more precipitation, the Peace reported approximately 50% of normal since April 1, and less than 25 mm (one inch) since early February. The forest and brush fire danger has increased, and consequently, the region remained classified D2 (Moderate Drought).

Throughout the winter, snowfall was below normal between January and March, while temperatures were well above average across the northwest and southern areas of British Columbia. As a result, low and mid elevation snow pack was generally below average or absent. Spring melt has also brought limited runoff from high elevations where snow remains. At the end of April, snowpacks across BC were below normal. These included the Nicola, Okanagan, Similkameen, and Kettle basins were all much below normal in the south. In the north, the Nass and Skeena were also well below normal; resulting in a continuation of the D2 (Severe Drought) and D1 (Moderate Drought) classifications. Across central British Columbia, precipitation remained below normal at less than 60% of average, so the D1 (Moderate Drought)

classification remained. Water supply challenges have developed in southern interior where water use restrictions were put in place in the Okanogan area, and voluntary restrictions were requested in the Nicola region. Reservoirs were at their lowest levels ever recorded, and were not expected to fill due to the very limited runoff. According to the Ministry of Environment, the dry conditions started the wildfire season one month earlier than in 2009. Without significant rainfall severe drought conditions will likely continue into the summer.

In northwest and southwest Ontario, precipitation deficits ranged over 300 mm (nearly twelve inches) since April 2009. Extremely dry conditions through the North western Ontario has resulted in a low water advisory was issued by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. The Thunder Bay region, many stations reported less than 50% of average precipitation for April, and less than 60% over the last six months. As a result, the The D2 (Severe Drought) classification was expanded and the D1 (Moderate Drought) classification remained. In the southwestern portion of the province, precipitation levels are similar to the north, resulting in a continued The D2 (Severe Drought) and a D1 (Moderate Drought) drought designation.