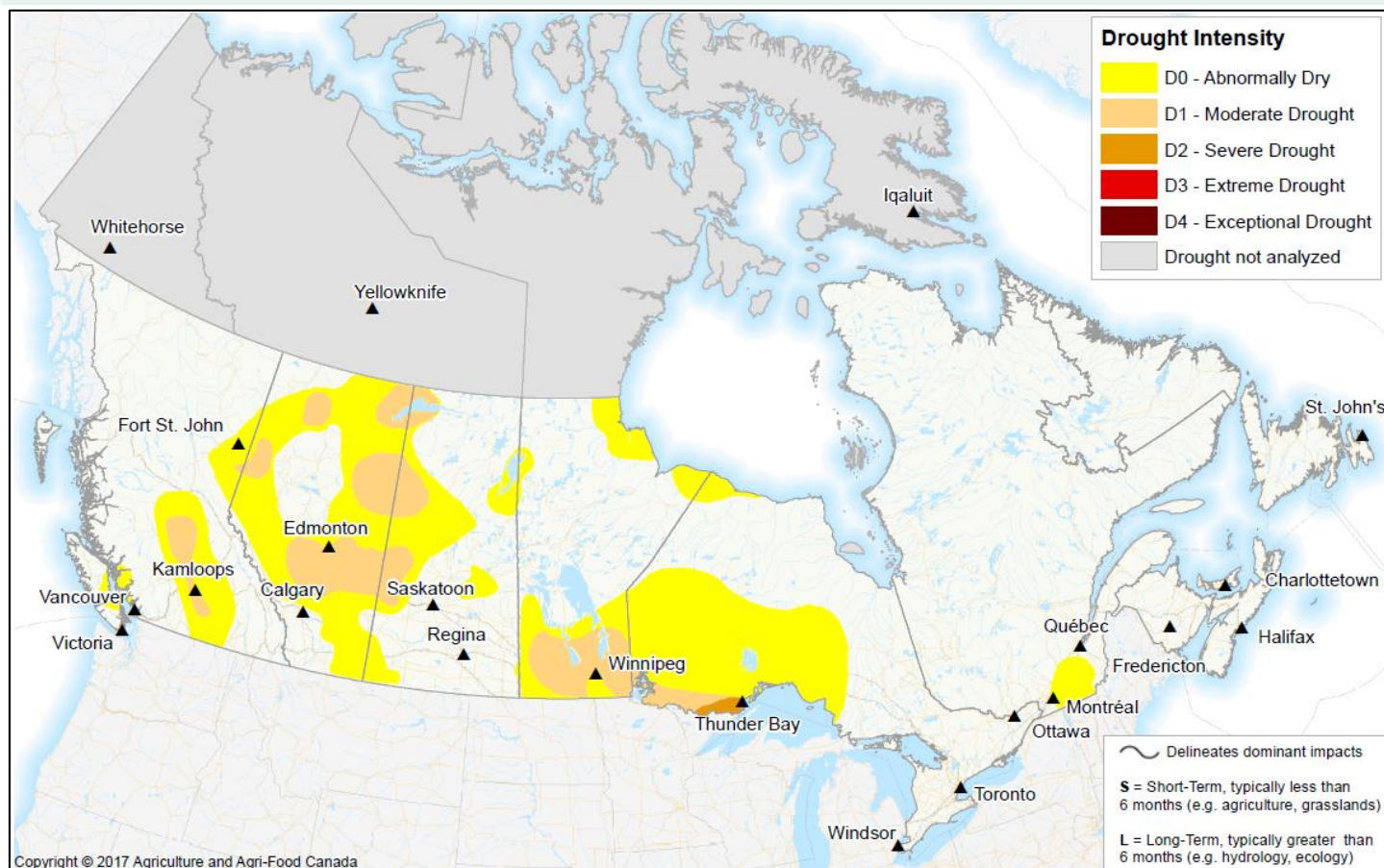


Canadian Drought Monitor

Conditions as of December 31, 2011



In December, Western Canada received very little precipitation continuing to increase the severity and extent of the abnormally dry and drought regions. Areas of noteworthy expansion within the last month include Southern Manitoba and the southern interior of British Columbia. Eastern Canada received normal or above normal precipitation throughout much of the region improving areas that previously were listed as abnormally dry. However a D0 designation has been added for the Sherbrooke region resulted due to the abnormal lack of snow cover. Unseasonably warm temperatures throughout much of Canada has resulted in significant moisture loss, which normally would not occur through the winter months. Temperatures on the prairies were between 4-9 degrees warmer than normal, with a much of northern Alberta and northern Saskatchewan 7-9 degrees above normal. Ground normally frozen and covered by a foot of snow remained bare and in some regions unfrozen, exposing soil moisture to drying winds. Although, a weak La Nina was occurring, typical weather associated with the La



Niña event was not occurring throughout much of Canada. As of the end of December, there was minimal change in the percent of area in D0 or a D1. 25% the analyzed area is in D0 or D1. This represents 39 per cent of agricultural land.

Pacific Region (BC)

In British Columbia, moderate drought (D1) continued in the central interior, and expanded southward to include Kamloops and Kelowna. The Abnormally dry conditions in the interior of British Columbia were also expanded south to the US border with areas in the Okanogan region receiving below 40% of normal since October 1st. High elevation snow accumulation continued, and there was minimal concern that rivers would be running lower than normal over the winter.

Since September 1, parts of Vancouver Island and the South Coast have been short over 200 mm (8 in), and as a result were classified abnormally dry (D0). Typically the west coast receives much of its yearly precipitation in the winter months, so the dry conditions would be alleviated quickly with a return to near normal levels over the next couple months.

Prairie Region (AB, SK, MB)

By the end of December, the prairie region had received well below normal snow and with abnormally high temperatures. Much of the snow that did fall melted leaving very little snow cover. In some areas of Manitoba and Saskatchewan cattle producers had to bring their herds back to the home yards for watering, where normally they would graze on snow in the pastures. For regions that had low soil moisture going into the winter, including central Alberta, western Saskatchewan and southern Manitoba, the drought conditions could intensify quickly in the spring without adequate snow melt and runoff to recharge soils and reservoirs. An expanding swath across east-central Alberta and west central Saskatchewan was classified D1 (Moderate Drought). In Manitoba, areas around Winnipeg and Portage La Prairie were almost 100 mm (4 in) short of moisture over the past three months, and also remained D1. Abnormally dry conditions encompassed much of the provinces agricultural land base. It is hard to think that only 7 month prior this same region was dealing with unprecedented flooding from saturated soils, melting of near record snow packs and significant spring storm events.

Above normal and in some cases record breaking temperatures throughout the entire prairie region has resulted in further moisture loss. Exposed unfrozen soils continued to be dried by strong winds. Dry, snow-less fields increases the threat of significant grass fires.

The Peace River region of northwest Alberta was classified D1. Drought conditions persist throughout much of this region resulting in both short term and long term impacts. Much of the region remained at below 60% of normal precipitation for previous 90 days. In northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, portions of the Lake Athabasca region remained in drought (D1), however conditions have improved over the past few months and the area of the D1 designation has been substantially reduced. In portions of the region that remains in D1, the precipitation deficit was over 200 mm over the past year.

Central Region (ON, QC)

In southeast Ontario mild temperatures resulted in rain instead of snowfall for most of December. Above average rainfall eliminated the abnormally dry conditions, and Conservation Authorities rescinded the Low Water Condition advisories. Long term drought remained in northwest Ontario, with many areas classified D1 to D0. Some places are over 180 mm (7.1 in) short of moisture over the past six months; about 50% of normal. Local Conservation Authorities identified Level 1 and Level 2 Low Water Conditions in the region. Like the Prairies, snowfall has been sparse over this northern boreal region which could bring an early start to the fire season next year if the forest remains dry.