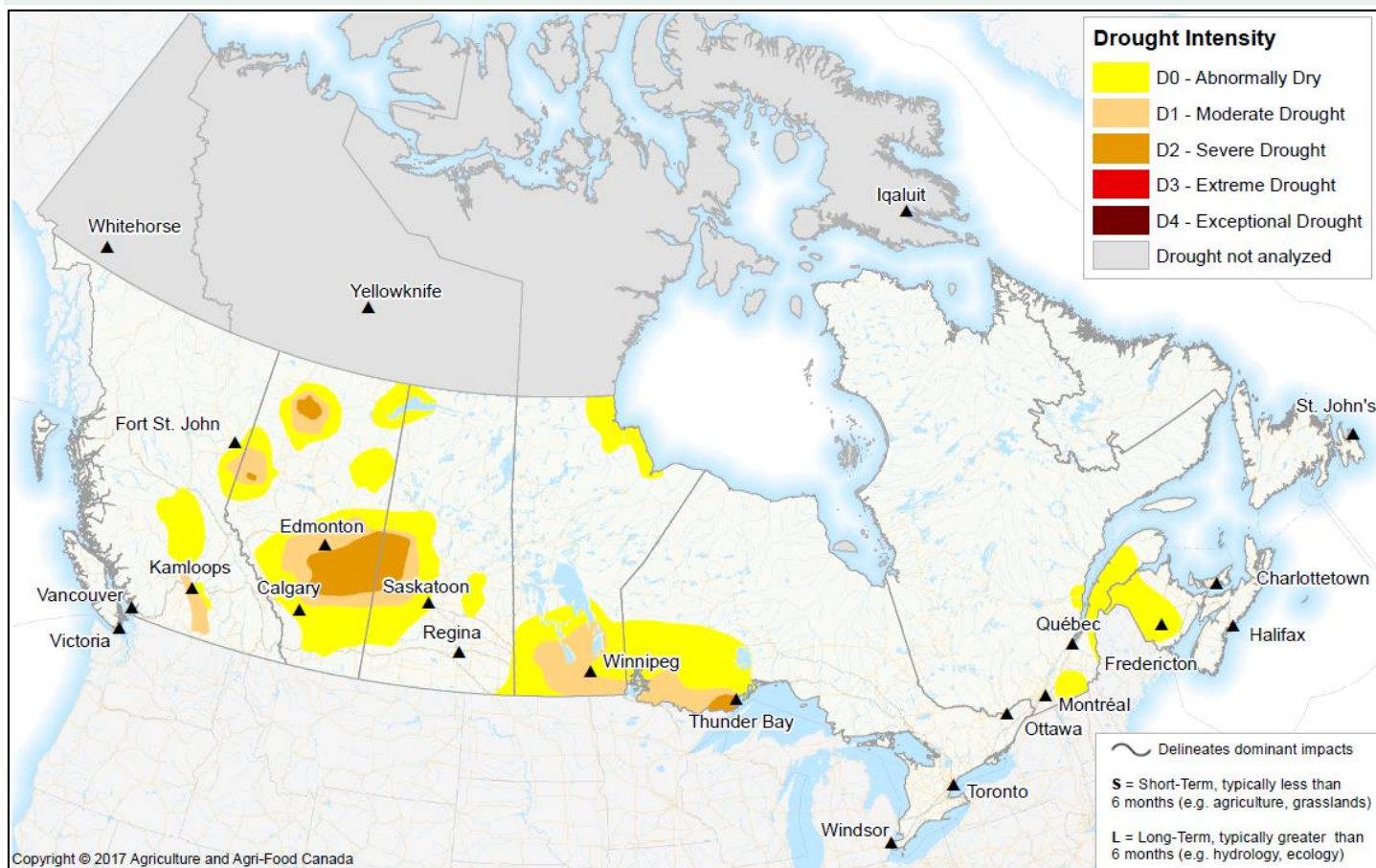


Canadian Drought Monitor

Conditions as of February 29, 2012



Drought conditions remained relatively consistent across the country in February. Two large areas of drought, central Alberta and southern Manitoba, grew slightly. Winter snowfall in these regions has been negligible at best following an abnormally dry autumn season. Minimal snow cover ahead of the spring thaw will not bring much relief to the extremely dry soil. Southern British Columbia and northwest Ontario were also much drier than normal. Looking ahead, temperatures from March through to May are expected to be above normal across southern Canada, from Saskatchewan east to the Atlantic Provinces. British Columbia and western Alberta are to be below normal. Precipitation is forecast to be above normal only in eastern Manitoba and northern Ontario, which does not bode well for drought areas in western Canada where above normal precipitation is needed.

Pacific Region (BC)



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In British Columbia, moderate drought (D1) continued in the central interior. Since October 1, The Okanogan region has received less than 40% of average precipitation and snowpack was about 75% of average. Abnormally dry (D0) conditions however were alleviated across southern Vancouver Island and the South Coast thanks to average rainfall received in February. The region will continue to be monitored.

Prairie Region (AB, SK, MB)

This winter has been quite exceptional across the Prairie region. Snow fall has been sparse in many regions leaving them record dry for the season. Any snow that did fall was often blown away by strong, warm winds, exposing soil moisture to evaporation. Typically the prairies receives most of its yearly precipitation from April to June, and though there is still plenty of time to receive the needed moisture to begin the growing season the dry winter has already impacted residents and will continue for some time. Pastures have been bare all winter and are short of moisture. Sloughs and dugouts dependent on spring runoff to fill up are low in many regions, forcing producers to continue hauling water for livestock. For areas 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 late winter or early spring precipitation. Due to the low snow pack and low soil moisture well below normal spring runoff is expected in most regions.

Due to the shortage of over winter precipitation, the D2 (Severe Drought) classification in east-central Alberta was expanded. Since September 1, 2011 the region is short more than 100 mm (4 in) of precipitation. That level of departure is significant for the region which normally receives about 400 mm (16 in) yearly. Winter wheat would generally be in danger of being wiped out with such minimal snow cover, but the temperatures have been well above normal to prevent that from happening. Pastures however remain quite dry. The region last went through a significant drought over the summer of 2009, so perennial grasses remain at risk if a drought takes hold. Drought conditions persisted throughout the Peace River region of northwest Alberta, which was classified D1. Over the past six months much of the region has had only 40-60% of normal precipitation. The region had a respite from its multi-year drought last summer when rainfall was above normal, but long term impacts continue and more severe drought conditions could develop quickly.

In southern Manitoba, areas surrounding Winnipeg remained over 100 mm (4 in) short of precipitation since September 1, 2011, and remained classified D1. Producers in the region continued to haul water for cattle where shallow wells have gone dry. In Saskatchewan, much of the west-central and southwest regions were abnormally dry (D0). The warm temperatures brought on the threat of brush fires much sooner than normal.

Long term drought was alleviated in the Lake Athabasca region of northern Alberta and Saskatchewan, leaving the region classified D0 from D1, where winter precipitation was higher than expected.

Central Region (ON, QC)

Northwest Ontario remained in long term drought (D1) with some places at less than 50% of normal all winter. Local Conservation Authorities maintained the Level 1 and Level 2 Low Water Conditions in the region. Similar to 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.

Atlantic Region (NS, NB, PE, NL)

Western New Brunswick and the Gaspé region of Quebec were classified abnormally dry where precipitation remained less than 75% of normal over the past six months. To date there has been minimal impact, but the region will continue to be monitored closely.