

OPEN LETTER TO ECOJUSTICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DEVON PAGE

November 2021

Mr. Page:

In response to the recently completed inquiry into the anti-Alberta activities of “charitable” organizations involved in the “Tar Sands Campaign” and other activities designed to shut down Canada’s oil & gas industry, you wrote the following email.



Dear

After three deadline extensions, widespread criticism, and a \$3.5M bill to the public, the Alberta government released its public inquiry report into “anti-Alberta” activities today.

A total of zero people were surprised by the “findings” of this very expensive Google search.

After reading the whole thing, we can confidently say that the report is exactly what we said it would be: a biased, unfair and politically motivated attempt to distract the public and silence organizations and individuals who speak out about the climate emergency.

Since the very start of the public inquiry, Ecojustice has questioned the validity of this witch hunt by the Alberta government against environmental activists.

Thank you for standing with us. We continue to count on your support to hold governments accountable across Canada. If you are able, please consider [making a donation today](#) to help support this vital work.

The record-breaking heatwaves, wildfires, droughts and other climate-related tragedies that ravaged Canada this summer have made it clear that the climate emergency is real and getting worse every day. There’s no time to waste with distractions while our planet is on fire.

Now that this shameful chapter in Alberta’s political history is finally over, Ecojustice will keep doing what we’ve been doing all along as the inquiry dragged on – holding governments to account and fighting in court to protect our planet.

Join us. If it is within your means, [please donate today](#).

Onward,
Devon Page,
executive director, Ecojustice

We have the following comments and questions in response.

Your professed concern for Alberta taxpayers is disingenuous.

Your email begins by raising a concern about the \$3.5 million cost of what you call a “very expensive Google search.” Your concern for Alberta taxpayers is disingenuous. The amount spent on the inquiry pales in comparison to the \$1.2 billion used to attack Alberta’s energy sector through the Tar Sands Campaign, and it is not even a rounding error compared to the family income, royalties, and taxes that would have been generated by the more than \$100 billion in fossil-fuel-related projects that Ecojustice and its allies helped to kill off. It is depressing to think about the hospitals, schools, First Nations community water systems, and many other life-improving projects that could have been funded by those now-defunct projects. The loss of these projects is made that much harder to accept given that the total effect on the worldwide production of fossil fuels was exactly zero, since it was simply transferred to countries with much poorer environmental standards and human rights records.

It is the organizations that attacked Alberta that are biased, unfair, and politically motivated.

Your letter states, “a total of zero people were surprised by the findings.” That’s because the objectives and tactics of Ecojustice and similarly minded organizations have been obvious to many people for a long time. It is biased and unfair to single out Canada, and in particular Alberta, while closing your eyes to oil & gas production in other countries and ignoring that petroleum is produced because it is demanded by consumers—most of whom have no viable alternatives and none of whom are consuming it because they hate the planet. It is hard to imagine anything more politically motivated than the Tar Sands Campaign.

Did you turn a blind eye to OPEC *et al.* because you and your activist friends were worried that attacking them would pose significant risks to your personal health or wealth? Is Canada’s responsible production of fossil fuels worse for humanity than the appalling working conditions and forced child labour where the minerals needed for “green” energy systems are mined? Did Albertans’ respect for fundamental rights and freedoms make them the easiest targets? Might some of Ecojustice’s foreign donors have economic and/or political interests in eliminating competition from an ethical and innovative Canadian oil & gas sector? Could it be that donors saw an opportunity to use organizations like yours to promote green energy systems because they are much more expensive than fossil-fuel-based systems when all costs, including the cost of turning renewable electricity into semi-reliable electricity, are properly considered? It is truly unfortunate for Canadians that Ecojustice is classified as a “charity,” because the Canada Revenue Agency does not require the kind of detailed information about the purpose or sources of your funding that Canadians deserve to be aware of.

The Alberta Inquiry report found that no individual or organization did anything illegal. That is not surprising, because it was not the inquiry’s purpose and because the inquiry was run by a forensic auditor, not Crown prosecutors. In any case, we agree with Terence Corcoran of the National Post, who wrote [1]:

The fact that there was nothing illegal in the tax and charity activities is beside the point. The real question that needs to be addressed is why and how the charitable tax system in the United States and Canada is used to fund the economic agendas of hundreds of activist organizations, environmental groups, political campaigns and other activities aimed not just at the Alberta fossil fuel industry.

Exactly what “charitable” activity is being performed by a group that aims to shut down a fossil fuel plant, block a forest development, or champion windmills? What justifies giving tax-free operating rights to foundations that have become massive political machines with agendas that have no relation to the original charities’ concepts?

The only witch-hunt here is the one targeting honest, hard-working Canadians.

Honest, hard-working people in Canada’s oil & gas industry directly or indirectly provide the energy and the thousands of petroleum-based products that hundreds of millions of North Americans depend on today and will continue to depend on for decades to come. If people had safe, reliable, and economically viable alternatives to fossil fuels, they would adopt them of their own accord—just as people have always adopted new, improved, or less expensive products that meet their needs—without having to be brow-beaten or carbon-dioxide-taxed into submission. Moreover, despite lecturing Canadians *ad nauseum* about what we have to give up to “save the world” from climate change, we are aware of no community of any meaningful size where eco-activists actually practice what they preach by using no fossil fuels, no petroleum products, and no CO₂-producing combustion. (They do, however, use fossil fuels to fly to UN conferences on their private jets, fly to court cases with the intent of killing jobs for “ordinary” people, drive to anti-pipeline

protests with the same intent, and power their computers to spread misinformation). It is all too likely that the result of their galactic-scale hypocrisy will be hungry Canadian children shivering in cold, dark homes.

You wrote that, “Since the very start of the public inquiry, Ecojustice has questioned the validity of this witch hunt by the Alberta government against environmental activists.” Given the report’s well supported findings, it’s not surprising that organizations like yours took a stand against an open public inquiry. Ecojustice’s stance is consistent with the omnipresent suppression of open and honest debate on the so-called “climate crisis” and the ongoing attempts to bury both real-world data and rigorous scientific studies. Indeed, the recent IPCC AR6 Working Group I report, which clearly shows that **there is no climate crisis**, is seldom discussed. Even the highly politicized Summary for Policymakers, which in many cases makes claims that are contrary to the Working Group I report, does not contain the words “crisis” or “alarming.” Yet politicians and eco-activists are still ramping up their demand for trillions of dollars in “reparations” for claimed but undetectable CO₂-caused damage. Freedom and human progress both depend on the free exchange of ideas, and both are under attack by eco-zealots—yet one of your principal arguments against the report is that it tries to dampen the freedom of speech of environmental groups. The report did nothing of the kind. Sadly, eco-activists are using their freedom of speech to destroy the livelihoods of many of the people whose job it is to defend freedom of speech.

In a rather stunning demonstration of hypocrisy, your email asserts that the Alberta inquiry was an “unfair and politically motivated attempt to distract the public and silence organizations and individuals who speak out about the climate emergency.” Yet in 2015, you attacked the Friends of Science Society’s right to free speech through a complaint to the Competition Bureau. Among other things:

- Ecojustice argued that the society should face substantial fines, and/or that contributors should be thrown in jail, for putting a few words and images (which were well supported by real science) on billboards;
- Ecojustice claimed that its purpose was to establish an honest debate on climate, but then refused our offers to engage and blocked us on Twitter; and
- Margaret Atwood, one of your honorary directors and then a vice president at PEN International (which in theory fights for the rights of dissidents) failed to respond to our open letter.

Had the Alberta Inquiry suggested the same actions against Ecojustice as Ecojustice suggested against the Friends of Science Society, the screaming from climate activists and the mainstream media would have been deafening. Free speech means free speech for all, not just those who agree with you.

Ecojustice has no legal or moral authority to hold governments in Canada accountable for implementing your and/or your donors’ visions of the future.

You state that Ecojustice continues to count on donors’ support “to hold governments accountable across Canada.” Elected officials are accountable to voters, not foreign- and domestic-funded ENGOS. No one granted you the legal or moral authority to hold governments accountable to your vision of the future and/or the vision of wealthy and often non-Canadian donors who will never have to choose between heating their homes and feeding their children.

Your email states that, now that a “shameful” chapter in Alberta’s history is over, Ecojustice will keep doing what it’s been doing all along: holding governments to account and fighting in court to “protect our

planet.” This chapter in Alberta’s history is not shameful because exposing the truth is never shameful, and it is not over because those (like Ecojustice) who are prepared to sacrifice the socioeconomic well-being of others to appease the false god of anthropogenic climate change are unfortunately still hard at work.

According to the *BP Statistical Review of World Energy June 2020* [2], Canada produced 556 Mt of CO₂ in 2019, which is a paltry 1.6% of the world’s total of 34 169 Mt. The combined emissions of China and India grew by 678 Mt in just the preceding two years. So, even if you believe the absurd proposition that 500 million years of natural climate change suddenly stopped in 1950 and that a gas that feeds plants and constitutes 0.04% of the atmosphere took over climate control, Canada could stop using fossil fuels tomorrow and just the growth (not total emissions) from just India and China would obliterate Canada’s reduction in less than two years.

As is becoming more apparent every day, “the green chickens are coming home to roost.” There have now been massive energy-system failures and/or astronomical energy price increases in California, Texas, and Europe, driven in large part by the unreliability of wind and solar generation. The failure of weather-driven wind/solar renewable energy during times of critical energy need is bad enough; reliance on renewable energy when it’s –30 °C across much of Canada in January would be even more deadly. What is “shameful” is that so many environmental activists’ concerns for the planet appear not to extend to the people living on it.

Notably, cold kills far more people than heat does. In a 2015 study published in *The Lancet* [3], Gasparrini *et al.* wrote:

We analysed 74 225 200 deaths in various periods between 1985 and 2012. In total, 7.71% (95% empirical CI 7.43–7.91) of mortality was attributable to non-optimum temperature in the selected countries within the study period, with substantial differences between countries, ranging from 3.37% (3.06 to 3.63) in Thailand to 11.00% (9.29 to 12.47) in China. The temperature percentile of minimum mortality varied from roughly the 60th percentile in tropical areas to about the 80–90th percentile in temperate regions. More temperature-attributable deaths were caused by cold (7.29%, 7.02–7.49) than by heat (0.42%, 0.39–0.44). Extreme cold and hot temperatures were responsible for 0.86% (0.84–0.87) of total mortality.

For Canada specifically, minimum mortality occurred at the 81st temperature percentile, which means temperatures were at or below optimal from a mortality perspective 81% of the time. Cold was implicated in 4.46% (3.39–5.48) of deaths, while heat was implicated in 0.54% (0.39–0.66).

A critical factor in any analysis of temperature-related mortality is the availability of energy. In Canada and most other cold-climate countries, well developed energy systems provide heating that mitigates cold-related deaths. At the residential level, cooling systems are less prevalent. Many hot-climate countries have limited, and often no, access to energy systems, so there is little mitigation of heat-related deaths. It follows that, if we were to turn off fossil fuels tomorrow and magically reduce atmospheric CO₂ to mid-1800s levels, the number of people that would die from the cold would be orders of magnitude greater than the number who would be saved by the CO₂ reduction, even under the patently false assumption that CO₂ is the sole controlling factor for Earth’s extreme heat and cold. Scaring children into thinking they are going to perish in some sort of heat-related climate catastrophe, as far too many eco-activists are inclined to do, is preposterous and downright despicable.

Your claim about record-breaking wildfires is false.

Speaking of scaring people, your email refers to “record-breaking heatwaves, wildfires, droughts and other climate-related tragedies that have ravaged Canada this summer.” Your claim is just another example from the incessant stream of scary mis-information that Canadians are forced to endure from biased, politically motivated, science-suppressing environmental activists. Your claim is easy to refute.

With respect to wildfires, Figure 1 at the end of this letter shows that, since 1980 in Canada, there has been no upward trend in hectares burned, there has been a downward trend in the number of fires, and inter-annual variability is normal [4]. Similar graphs exist for individual provinces. Data for the United States also shows no upward trend that can be linked to CO₂, though consistent with our point about the suppression of real-world data, historical data that does not fit the climate-crisis narrative is sometimes altered, made more difficult to find, or “disappeared” [5].

In a 2021 paper titled *A Disrupted Historical Fire Regime in Central British Columbia* [6], Brookes *et al.* from the University of British Columbia Faculty of Forestry looked much further back than 1980. They studied historical fire frequency, severity, and spatial patterns in a dry Douglas-fir forest and found that fires burned at a range of frequencies and severities. They write:

The 23 fires between 1619 and 1943 burned at intervals of 10–30 years, primarily at low- to moderate-severity that scarred trees but generated few cohorts. In contrast, current fire-free intervals of 70–180 years exceed historical maximum intervals. Of the six widespread fires from 1790 to 1905, the 1863 fire affected 86% of plots and was moderate in severity with patches of higher severity that generated cohorts at fine scales only. ... [T]he post-1863 cohorts persisted due to disruption of the fire regime in the twentieth century when land-use shifted from Indigenous fire stewardship and early European settler fires to fire exclusion and suppression. In the absence of low- to moderate-severity fires, contemporary forests are dense with closed canopies that are vulnerable to high-severity fire.

(Note that a *cohort* is a group of trees starting as a result of the same disturbance.) A virtually identical assessment for the United States can be found in [7].

Of course, large, severe fires are nothing new. The Miramichi fire in New Brunswick in 1825 burned over a million hectares (compared to 590 000 hectares for the Fort McMurray fire of 2016) and it killed at least 160 people—and possibly more as people drowned trying to escape into water. The single largest fire in recorded history in North America was the Chinchaga fire in northern British Columbia and Alberta in 1950, which burned about 1.4 million hectares. The smoke pall was seen around the world, and some feared that the blue sun and moon were harbingers of the end of the world [8].

Contrary to the lie perpetuated by climate alarmists that fossil fuels are the primary cause of every bad-weather event, the UBC study did not cite CO₂ as a cause for recent high-severity fires. That’s not surprising because CO₂ is plant food. Not only does CO₂ make plants more drought-tolerant, it gets pumped into greenhouses because plants grow best at CO₂ concentrations that are two to three times greater than that in Earth’s present atmosphere [9]. Moreover, a 2016 NASA news release titled *Carbon Dioxide Fertilization Greening Earth* [10] noted that “From a quarter to half of Earth’s vegetated lands has shown significant greening over the last 35 years largely due to rising levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide,” and that “the greening represents an increase in leaves on plants and trees equivalent in area to two times the continental

United States.” And perhaps more importantly—given Earth’s rising population—crop yields across the world have been rising for 60 years due in part to CO₂ fertilization as shown in Figure 2 [11].

There is also no meaningful trend in global soil moisture. According to the American Meteorological Society (“AMS”) *State of the Climate in 2020* [12], page S67:

The global surface soil moisture conditions in 2020, as measured by satellite, were on average close to the climatology derived from historical data of the 1991–2010 period, being slightly wetter than normal at the start of the year. Although still present, the large discrepancy between the Northern Hemisphere (NH) and Southern Hemisphere (SH) observed at the end of 2019 became slightly less pronounced in 2020 (Fig. 2.34). Drier-than-usual conditions persisted in the SH throughout 2020, and while the record wet peak of the NH at the end of 2019 weakened, it remained historically high in 2020. [Emphasis added.]

Your claim about record-breaking droughts is also false.

Like your claim about record-breaking forest fires, your claim about record-breaking droughts is false. There is no long-term upward trend in worldwide drought conditions, as shown by the graph on page S69 of the aforementioned AMS climate report. Nor is there an upward trend in drought in Canada. The Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative (“PARC”) provides the graph shown as Figure 3, and it notes that: (i) drought conditions are a common feature of the prairies; (ii) drought conditions are highly variable and can persist for decades or longer; and (iii) the climate of the twentieth century was favourable for settlement because *it lacked the sustained droughts of preceding centuries* [13]. The article goes on to state that “The years of drought impacting on the province are: 1910, 1914, 1917-1921, 1924, 1929, 1931-1939, 1958-1963, 1967-1969, 1974, 1977, 1979-1981, 1983-1986, 1988-1992, 2001-03 and 2009.” Human-driven CO₂ emissions are generally accepted to not have materially affected the climate prior to about 1950, when human industrial emissions were low compared to subsequent decades.

In *Historical drought patterns over Canada and their teleconnections with large-scale climate signals* [14], Asong *et al.* reported in 2018 that, over the period 1953–2013, southern parts of the country experienced significant trends toward drier conditions while northern parts experienced significant trends toward wetter conditions (although substantial variability exists). They did not cite CO₂ as the cause of both drier and wetter conditions. Rather:

The analyses also revealed the presence of a dominant periodicity of between 8 and 32 months in the Prairie region and between 8 and 40 months in the northern central region. These cycles of low-frequency variability are found to be associated principally with the Pacific–North American (PNA) and Multivariate El Niño/Southern Oscillation Index (MEI) relative to other considered large-scale climate indices.

In other words, natural cycles, not fossil fuels, are responsible for droughts in Canada.

California is often held up as a “poster child” for fires and droughts supposedly caused by the burning of fossil fuels. However, California has a long history of severe droughts. For example, in his article titled *Change of State* [15], author Dan Baum states:

The ancient record, etched in tree rings, shows patterns similar to those of today: long dry spells punctuated by fleeting wet years. In the year 1130, the rain tapered off and did not start again in earnest for another 40 years. Multidecade droughts show up in tree rings throughout California’s history.

Finally, there is no trend in worldwide drought either, as Figure 4 (from the aforementioned AMS climate report) shows.

The idea that eliminating fossil fuels will save us from fires and droughts would be laughable were it not for the fact that so many people will ultimately be harmed by such false claims if people stupidly phased out fossil fuels without an equivalent or better replacement form of energy.

The heat experienced this past summer in western North America can be fully explained as an unusual confluence of normal weather conditions; climate change need not be invoked.

Regarding the record-breaking heatwave you mention, it was indeed record-breaking—at least within the microscopic fraction of Earth’s climate history for which we have an instrumental temperature record. However, the burning of fossil fuels is neither the only nor the most likely explanation, as discussed by meteorologist Cliff Mass in *Was Global Warming the Cause of the Great Northwest Heatwave? Science says No* [16]. In a 2019 NBC News article [17], Laura Poppick wrote:

An ancient forest has thawed from under a melting glacier in Alaska and is now exposed to the world for the first time in more than 1,000 years.

Stumps and logs have been popping out from under southern Alaska's Mendenhall Glacier — a 36.8-square-mile (95.3 square kilometers) river of ice flowing into a lake near Juneau — for nearly the past 50 years. However, just within the past year or so, researchers based at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau have noticed considerably more trees popping up, many in their original upright position and some still bearing roots and even a bit of bark, the Juneau Empire first reported last week.

In other words, the “record-breaking heatwave” is measured against today’s climate, not the much warmer, forest-supporting climate of 1000 years ago. This point is made crystal clear for the United States in Figure 5, which shows the heatwave index for that country since 1895 [18]. The implicit suggestion that the heatwave was “unprecedented” in Earth’s history and could only have been caused by human CO₂ emissions, is simply dishonest. In fact, when the geologic record—as opposed to the record starting about 1850, at the end of a cold period that started in ~1500 called the *Little Ice*—is considered, Earth is seen to presently be not far above the lowest-temperature, lowest-CO₂ period in its history [19].

The fact that heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires existed long before humans started burning fossil fuels does not diminish the recent tragedies in which lives were lost and property was destroyed. It does mean, however, that no matter how much eco-activists might wish it were otherwise, eliminating fossil fuels is not going to save humans from weather-related events. Dangerously, however, the false claim that CO₂ is the root cause of almost everything bad that happens in the natural world will divert research and resources that could be far better used to address the world’s *real* problems. On that note, Figure 6 shows that lives lost due to weather-related events have plummeted in the last century [20].

In Summary

When:

- Ecojustice has convinced Russia, China, India, Saudi Arabia, and all other countries to give up fossil fuels on the same timetable it is demanding for Canada;
- Ecojustice representatives and their activist allies have spent a few years leading by example, living their lives in Canadian conditions with no fossil fuels, no petroleum products of any kind, and no CO₂-producing combustion (and have lived to tell about it);

- Ecojustice can provide a cost-benefit analysis for CO₂ emissions that does not, as eco-activists normally do, just ignore the staggering costs of eliminating fossil fuels and the very real benefits of CO₂ fertilization (including but not limited to improved crop yields);
- Ecojustice is prepared to provide full disclosure of its donors, their donations, and any conditions attached thereto, so that people can judge the impartiality and veracity of Ecojustice’s submissions on climate policies;
- Ecojustice can make a clear and compelling case that Canadians will continue to have access to a safe, reliable, and affordable supply of energy once fossil fuels have been banned; and
- Ecojustice can assure Canadians that there are safe, effective, and affordable alternatives to all petroleum-based products including life-saving medicines,

then, and *only* then, should any attention be paid to its demands.

FIGURES

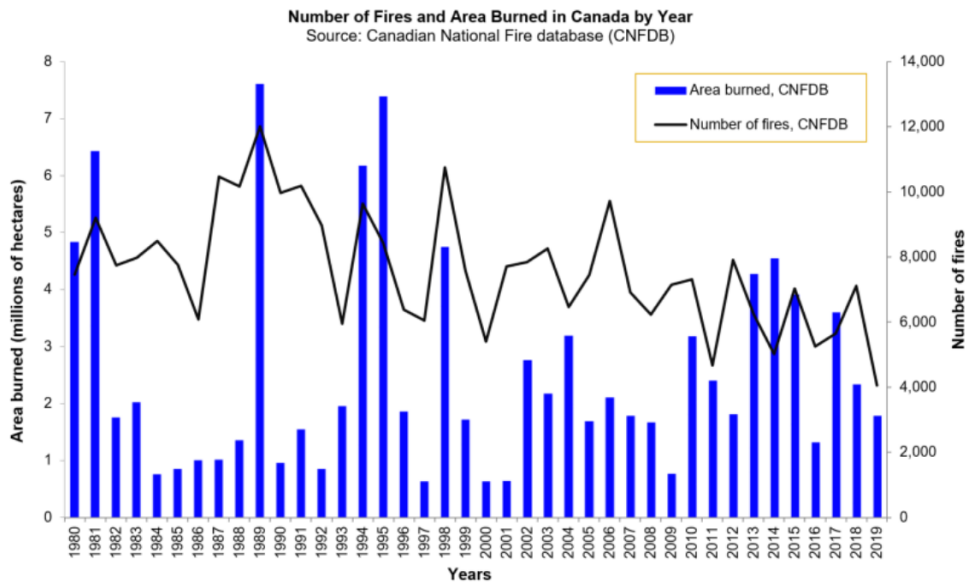


Figure 1: Annual number of wildfires and annual area burned in Canada since 1980. Large variability is a common feature of forest fires.

Crop yields, World, 1961 to 2018

Crop yields are measured in tonnes per hectare.

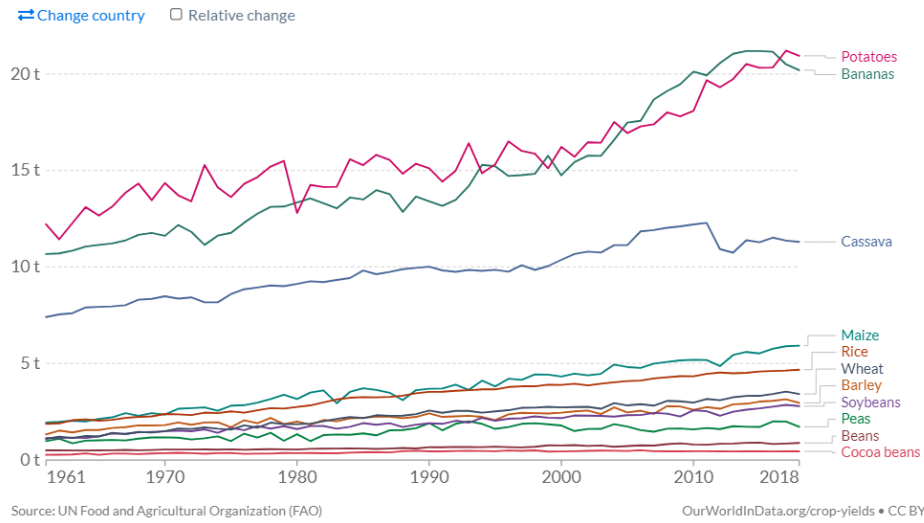


Figure 2: Crop yields across the world since 1961.

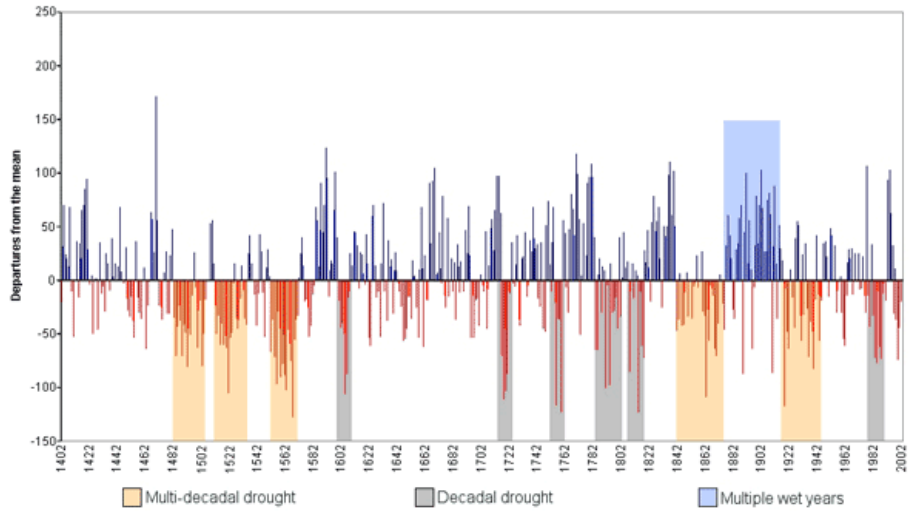


Figure 3: Historical droughts on the Canadian Prairies.

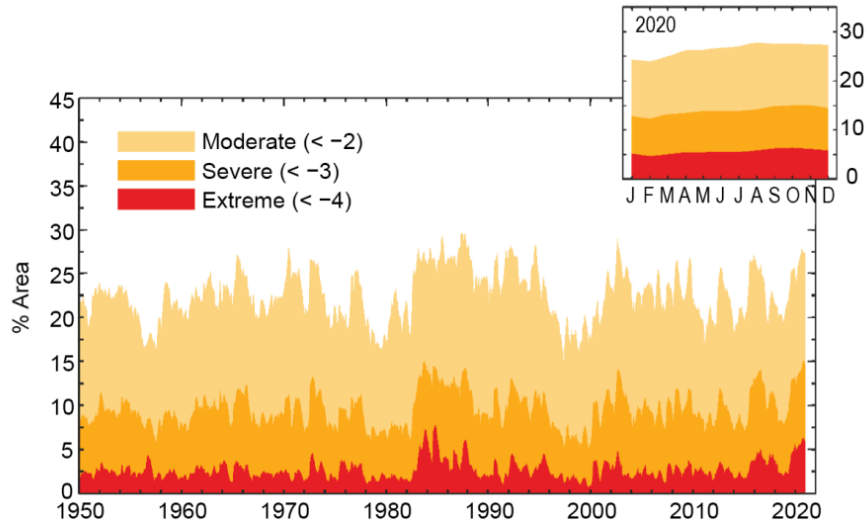


Fig. 2.35. Percentage of global land area (excluding ice sheets and deserts) with scPDSI indicating moderate (< -2), severe (< -3) and extreme (< -4) drought for each month of 1950–2020. Inset: Each month of 2020, denoted by first letter.

Figure 4: As described in the caption from the original document.

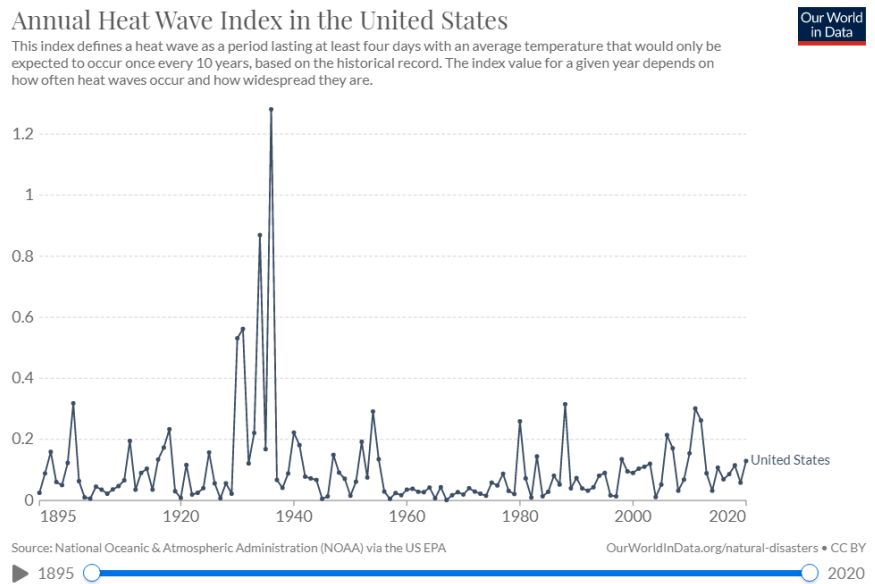


Figure 5: Annual heat wave index in the United States.

Global deaths from natural disasters, 1900 to 2019

Absolute number of global deaths per year as a result of natural disasters. "All natural disasters" includes those from drought, floods, extreme weather, extreme temperature, landslides, dry mass movements, wildfires, volcanic activity and earthquakes.

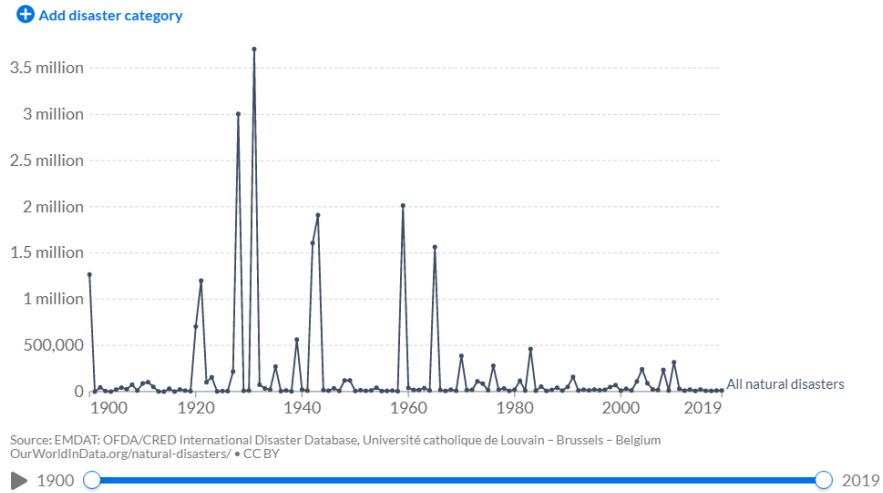


Figure 6: Global deaths from natural disasters, including extreme weather.

REFERENCES AND LINKS

- 1 [Terence Corcoran: Report on environmental groups targeting Alberta oil exposes disastrous charitable system \(msn.com\)](#)
- 2 [Statistical Review of World Energy | Energy economics | Home \(bp.com\)](#)
- 3 [Mortality risk attributable to high and low ambient temperature: a multicountry observational study - The Lancet](#)
- 4 [Canadian Wildland Fire Information System | Canadian National Fire Database \(CNFDB\) \(nrcan.gc.ca\).](#)
- 5 [CAUGHT: 'Inconvenient' U.S. Wildfire Data Has Been 'Disappeared' by National Interagency Fire Center @NIFC_Fire – Watts Up With That?](#)
- 6 [A Disrupted Historical Fire Regime in Central British Columbia](#)
- 7 [Indicator 15.pdf \(fs.fed.us\)](#)
- 8 [The Chinchaga Firestorm \(ualberta.ca\)](#)
- 9 [Greenhouse Carbon Dioxide Supplementation | Oklahoma State University \(okstate.edu\)](#)
- 10 [Carbon Dioxide Fertilization Greening Earth](#)
- 11 [Crop Yields - Our World in Data](#)
- 12 [State of the Climate in 2020](#)
- 13 [SaskAdapt--Drought](#)
- 14 [HESS - Historical drought patterns over Canada and their teleconnections with large-scale climate signals \(copernicus.org\)](#)

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- ¹⁵ Scientific American, Vol. 313, No. 2, August 2015, pp. 64-71 (print copy)
- ¹⁶ [Was Global Warming The Cause of the Great Northwest Heatwave? Science Says No](#)
- ¹⁷ [Still standing: Ancient Alaskan forest thaws from melting glacial tomb \(nbcnews.com\)](#)
- ¹⁸ *Annual Heat Wave Index in the United States*, [Natural Disasters - Our World in Data](#).
- ¹⁹ See Chapter 3, and in particular Figure 14, in: Moore, Patrick (2021): *Fake Invisible Catastrophes and Threats of Doom*, Ecosense Environmental, Comox, BC.
- ²⁰ [Natural Disasters - Our World in Data](#)