

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3203

June 8, 2023

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

I am writing to express my concern for the health and safety of New Yorkers, and all Americans, affected by the smoke resulting from the wildfires currently raging in Quebec, Canada. I urge the U.S. Forest Service (FS) to double the personnel preparing to deploy to help Canada fight these forest fires and protect the lives and health of all those impacted.

As you know, the Quebec wildfires of recent days have caused terrible air quality impacts across much of the northeastern United States, including New York. Today, the United States had the worst air quality in the world with New York City measuring particulate matter 14.5 times greater than the World Health Organization's annual air quality guideline value¹. Over the past two days, much of New York State has faced Hazardous air quality index (AQI) ratings of over 300, levels at which all people are likely to be affected, no matter their health². This poor air quality has caused flight cancellations, restaurant closures, and Broadway show cancellations, grinding New York City, and the rest of the state, to a halt. Rapidly returning our air quality to normal, healthy levels is of the utmost importance.

Containing these fires is the best way to prevent more smoke from drifting into the U.S. and returning air quality in New York and elsewhere to healthy levels. To assist their Canadian counterparts in their firefighting efforts, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) has already deployed one Forest Ranger to assist with efforts to contain the raging fires³. The Northeastern Forest Fire Protection Compact (P.L.81-129) grants the U.S. Forest Service authority to provide necessary cross-border assistance to cope with fires beyond a sole entity's capabilities⁴. I ask that FS prepare to send additional personnel to provide the Canadian Forest Service with whatever necessary expertise and service they require to contain and end these fires as quickly as possible.

¹ <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240034228>

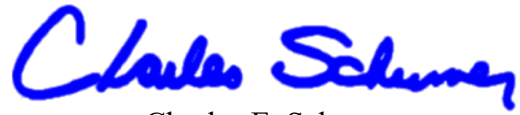
² <https://www.airnow.gov/aqi/aqi-basics/#:~:text=Think%20of%20the%20AQI%20as,300%20represents%20hazardous%20air%20quality.>

³ <https://www.dec.ny.gov/press/127810.html>

⁴ P.L.81-129

Thank you for your attention to this request. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 202-224-6542 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator