The July wildfires are reshaping actor influence and framing in Canada's climate coverage

The fortnight's question — How are the recent wildfires redistributing influence in Canadian climate coverage: which actors gain or lose the floor, which types of voices carry the story, and through which frames is it told?

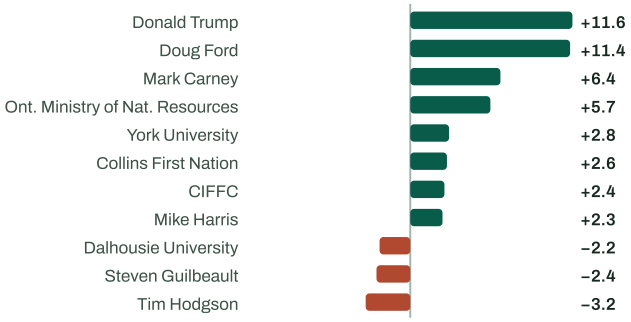
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We compare four weeks of climate coverage before the shock (June 17 – July 14, 548 deduplicated stories) with the twelve days of the episode (July 15 – 26, 306 stories), on three planes: named actors, messenger types and the eight sentence-level frames. Three results. Wildfires supplied 39.1% of climate coverage, 3.2 times the July 2025 seasonal norm. Influence (story reach and cross-outlet spread) moved toward the operational state (Doug Ford, Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources, the CIFFC, the Red Cross), evacuated Indigenous communities and smoke diplomacy (Donald Trump), while federal climate policy (Guilbeault, Hodgson) and industry left the ranking. The wildfire story mobilizes mostly officials and the political frame; the environmental, economic and justice frames, like economic, advocacy and health voices, are marginal in it — scientists keep their share, carried by wildfire specialists. For a climate actor, the health window and climate attribution remain nearly empty speaking spaces during the episode.

KEY MESSAGES

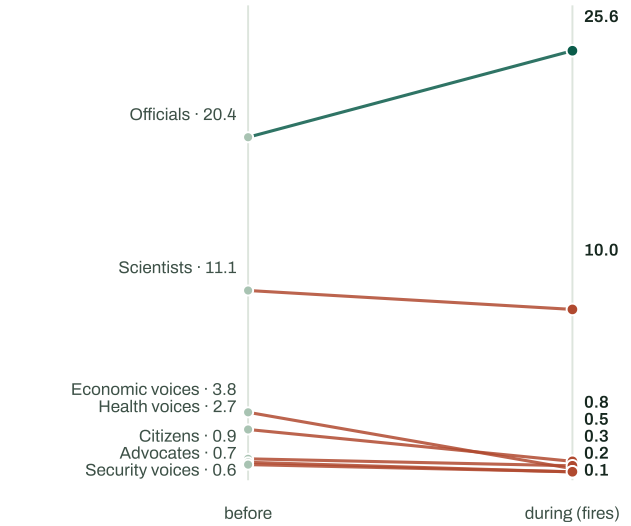
- **An attention shock well past seasonal norms.** From July 15 to 26, wildfires supplied 39.1% of Canadian climate coverage (155 of 363 articles). With identical headline flagging, July 2025 stood at 8.4%: this episode weighs 3.2 times the seasonal norm.
- **The floor moves to the operational state and affected communities.** Doug Ford (from 3.6 to 15.0% of stories), Ontario's Ministry of Natural Resources, the CIFFC, the Red Cross and the evacuated First Nations enter the ranking; Guilbeault, Hodgson and Pathways Alliance all but leave it.
- **Smoke becomes a trade and diplomacy file.** Donald Trump and Midwestern Republicans, who threaten Canada with tariffs over cross-border smoke, drive the largest individual gain (+11.6 points of story share).
- **The dominant story is civil protection and political sparring.** Wildfire articles carry 2.1% environmental-frame sentences (5.5% elsewhere) and 6.9% economic-frame sentences (16.5% elsewhere); economic, advocacy and health voices fall below 1% in them.

WHO GAINS, WHO LOSES THE FLOOR



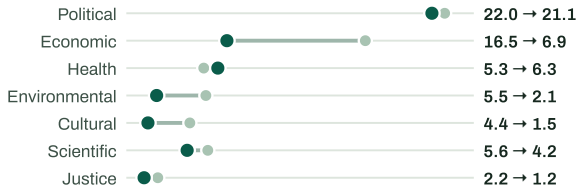
Change in the share of stories mentioning each actor (percentage points), pre window (June 17 – July 14, n = 548 stories) → post (July 15 – 26, n = 306). Influence combines this reach with spread (distinct outlets, table below). Deduplicated stories (syndication, live blogs); selection: adjusted $p < 0.05$ (BH).

TYPES OF VOICES, BEFORE → DURING



Mean share of sentences carrying each messenger type (%): full pre-shock corpus (light) → wildfire articles (dark). Officials: adjusted $p = 0.042$; economic, advocacy and health voices: $p < 0.001$; scientists: n.s.

HOW WILDFIRE ARTICLES ARE FRAMED



Mean share of sentences per article (%): rest of July 15 – 26 coverage (light) → wildfire articles (dark).

WHO CARRIES THE WILDFIRE STORY

People

	STORIES	OUTLET
Doug Ford	32	●●●●●
Mark Carney	32	●●●●●●
Donald Trump	28	●●●●●●
Danielle Sm...	7	●●●
Mike Harris	7	●●●

Organizations

	STORIES	OUTLET
ECCC	20	●●●●●
MNR (Ont.)	18	●●●
Env. Canada	17	●●●●●●
CIFFC	8	●●●●
York U.	8	●●

Most present actors within the 155 wildfire articles (distinct stories, distinct outlets). The Ford / Harris surge rests on 5 outlets, led by the Toronto Star and CBC: this is, above all, an Ontario story.

LIMITS

Unequal windows compared as shares; pre/post design without a counterfactual; fire corpus flagged via headlines and detected events (conservative contrasts); episode still running at closing; Ontarian concentration (Ford / Harris: 5 outlets).

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CLIMATE ACTORS

- **The health window is under-occupied.** Smoke reaches millions; health voices carry 0.8% of sentences in wildfire articles. A public-health actor speaking during the episode speaks nearly alone.
- **Climate attribution remains a niche.** The environmental frame of wildfire articles (2.1%) sits below the rest of the coverage; a handful of specialists (York University, ICLR) hold it. Room exists for anyone linking fires and climate with data.
- **Background agendas lose their audience during the shock.** Guilbeault, Hodgson and Pathways lost most of their presence in ten days. A message anchored to the event inherits its audience; a report released mid-episode lands in a blind spot.

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METHODS

CCF continuous corpus, 19 Canadian outlets, 992 articles from June 17 to July 26, 2026 (548 pre stories, 306 post after deduplication), sentence-level annotations by the CCF models. z and Welch tests, Benjamini-Hochberg correction; all figures generated programmatically from the result tables.