



## **Canadian Hispanic Congress**

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***Celebrating the 40th anniversary of  
the Canadian Hispanic Congress***

# Unprecedented Wildfires Sweep Canada in 2023, Revealing Climate Vulnerability

Throughout the summer of 2023, Canada has experienced devastating wildfires due to escalating emissions and climate change, leading to a chain reaction of ecological and climate disturbances. These fires caused extensive destruction, damaging homes and cities, prompting evacuations, and resulting in loss of life and livelihoods. Firefighters battled the blazes, but the emotional toll on affected individuals was substantial. The fires released significant carbon emissions, exacerbating global warming, and causing air quality alerts to spike.

The intricate interactions between smoke, aerosols, and sunlight produced localized cooling effects while the loss of forests and decreased plant transpiration contributed to long-term warming at the surface. Surprisingly, the fires also impacted the stratosphere, causing unexpected warming and potential atmospheric circulation shifts.

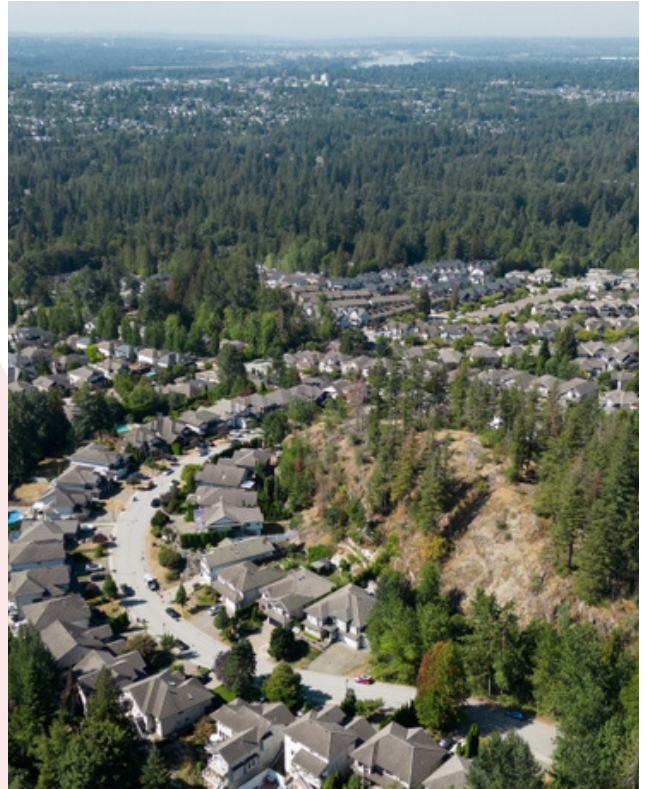
Remarkably, Canada observed over 133 pyrocumulonimbus clouds in 2023, a stark increase from previous years, providing insights into their global climate ramifications. This crisis underscores the need for informed action, emphasizing the importance of combining scientific research, policy changes, and public awareness to address the challenge. Canada's response should focus on fostering resilience and sustainability, aiming to confront wildfires strategically and uphold a commitment to climate resilience for a better future.



# Housing Market Outlook in Canada: Adjustments and Trends Amidst the Crisis

Canada's housing market has transitioned from rapid growth to a period of decline due to interest rate hikes and affordability issues. Overvalued markets like Toronto, Vancouver, and Hamilton have seen significant declines, while Prairie provinces are faring better in terms of affordability. Median house prices are projected to drop by 15% from their mid-2022 peak before stabilizing in early 2024. This correction is seen as a necessary adjustment after years of house price growth that outpaced income increases and strained debt service ratios. Recent data also reveals a decline in existing-home sales, attributed to high interest rates deterring buyers and prompting homeowners to hold off listing their properties.

The decline in the total value of residential building permits indicates a cooling housing market, attributed to high mortgage rates constraining housing demand and investment for construction projects. The introduction of a law prohibiting non-Canadian citizens from purchasing residential properties is aimed at curbing property speculation, though its impact on price appreciation is limited. Economic growth is expected to slow due to factors like higher interest rates, reduced consumer spending, and weakened business demand. While a mild technical recession is expected, the negative impact on the labor market is projected to be less severe due to recent trends in hiring challenges and job mobility.



## From Fear to Stalemate: Navigating COVID-19's Evolution in Canada.



The COVID-19 pandemic's trajectory has shifted from fear to a "stalemate" with the virus in Canada. While once a formidable pathogen, SARS-CoV-2's impact has been curbed by widespread immunity and evolving vaccines. A recent study revealed that around 75% of Canadians possess antibodies from prior infections, fortified by vaccinations, creating a potent hybrid immunity. This immunity has transformed COVID-19 into a seasonal challenge, akin to the flu.

Amidst this immunity landscape, a new variant, EG.5, has emerged. An offspring of the Omicron lineage, EG.5 can dodge some immune defenses, leading to breakthrough infections. However, hybrid immunity and forthcoming tailored booster shots provide strong safeguards against severe illness.

As the fall approaches, early signals hint at a potential COVID-19 wave in Canada. Hospitalizations are rising, and timely booster shots are pivotal in shaping this wave's impact. The population's evolving immunity and booster strategies will shape the virus's trajectory.

In the broader context, COVID-19 is becoming an endemic reality. It has shifted from a deadly threat to a manageable challenge for many, thanks to immunity and evolving vaccine adaptations. While occasional spikes may occur, our collective vigilance, informed decisions, and preparedness will continue to navigate the ongoing complexities of this ever-changing virus.

# The Cell Phone Dilemma



The use of cell phones in classrooms sparks debate over their potential benefits and drawbacks. Educators grapple with how to effectively integrate these devices for learning while preventing distractions and addressing bullying concerns. Strategies to manage cell phone use include building relationships by discussing the impact of cell phones on teachers and students, planned use for educational purposes, allocating social breaks for controlled phone access, allowing face-down placement on desks, and modeling responsible use. Conversations with students reveal varied motivations, such as seeking help discreetly or finding emotional support amid challenges like bullying.

The debate on cell phone bans remains prominent. Advocates argue that excessive use affects mental health and learning habits, while opponents stress the potential educational value of responsible use. Ontario is the sole Canadian province with an active ban, though individual schools and districts have implemented bans independently. However, some students and parents oppose bans, highlighting cell phones as crucial tools for learning, communication, and safety. The key lies in finding a balance that harnesses cell phones for educational purposes while mitigating distractions, emphasizing the importance of ongoing adaptation to meet students' changing needs in the digital age.

## Quebec Takes a Stand: Banning Cellphones in Public School Classrooms to Boost Focus

Quebec's Education Minister Bernard Drainville has announced plans to ban cellphones in public school classrooms, with exceptions for educational purposes. Drainville aims to enhance students' concentration and engagement by reducing distractions caused by cellphone use. The decision comes after many teachers supported the ban in a recent survey. The move mirrors a similar ban in Ontario since 2019, although challenges in enforcement persist. Schools in Quebec will be responsible for determining how to implement and enforce the ban effectively.

While some educators like Mike Wadden welcome the ban for its potential to improve student focus and reduce distractions, others such as Patti Bacchus advocate for a more educative approach that teaches responsible device use. A similar initiative at Chatelech Secondary School in British Columbia has led to improved mental health, decreased bullying, increased engagement, and better academic performance.

Quebec's decision to ban cellphones in classrooms reflects a broader debate about technology's impact on education. As schools work to implement the ban, questions about enforcement and educational value persist, prompting discussions about finding the right balance between technology and learning.



# Message from the president

As we celebrate 40 years of service to the Hispanic Latin American community, we want to share with you a little bit about our work.

The Canadian Hispanic Congress was founded in 1983 to advocate for Hispanic Latin Americans in Canada, with the goal of facilitating the full integration of the very diverse Spanish speaking community, into the economic, cultural, social, and political life of Canada.

The Canadian Hispanic Congress focuses its work in three major areas, the development and strengthening of the Spanish speaking community in Canada, political advocacy on behalf of Spanish speakers in Canada and around the world and the support of organizations that serve the Spanish speaking community and organizations created by members of the Spanish speaking community.

Since 2001, the Canadian Hispanic Congress has worked with Statistics Canada to ensure that the data published by StatsCan accurately reflects the size and demographics of the Spanish speaking community in Canada. Through our research and our collaboration with Stats Can, we have been able to determine that the actual number of Spanish speakers in Canada is almost twice the number reported by Statistics Canada. Officially retabulated figures are then published by the Canadian Hispanic Congress.

Along with many other activities of the CHC, our semi-annual conferences pro-empowerment of Women bring together Spanish speaking women and women outside of our community, for the purpose of providing opportunities for women to examine the status of women in Canada and the world and to work together towards the achievement of women and girl empowerment. The CHC maintains a constant awareness of developments in Latin American countries with the mission of advocating for political and economic aid as needed. Knowledge is power and the CHC is committed to disseminating information relevant to the lives of Spanish speaking Canadians. After 40 years of service, the CHC stands as an ally for organizations in our community, offering support and intervening against injustice. With an unwavering dedication to education, immigration, health and well being, sustainability, research and development, arts and culture, LGBTQ matters, and any support needed by our community, the CHC remains a dynamic force enhancing the welfare of the Hispanic Latin American community.

As September rolls in and students return to school, we begin to see the outline of the end of summer 2023, yet another eventful summer of forest fires and draught for many Canadians. For those directly affected by the record number of forest fires, the end of this summer could not come fast enough. There is a possibility of relief with the arrival of the changing weather. We continue to follow the developments with great concern, and our thoughts are with all Canadians affected by wildfires and other mishaps.

Back to school and to many other indoor activities also has us pondering the possible effects of the newest COVID strain, and questions regarding indoor air quality in our schools come to the forefront. We are assured by provincial governments that much work has been done in this area and we can look forward to a more sedate start back to school. We wish parents and guardians, students, and school staff a wonderful start to the new academic year.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you [president@canadianhispaniccongress.com](mailto:president@canadianhispaniccongress.com).

Warm regards,

Monique Forster

President, Canadian Hispanic Congress



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