

# Alberta Premier Danielle Smith Pledges Arson Investigation Into 175 Wildfires with No Known Cause

By [Rachel Emmanuel](#)

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*Alberta Premier Danielle Smith says her government will hire arson investigators from outside the province following an unseasonably early and destructive wildfire season.*

Fires in Alberta reached a crisis point in early May, just days into the provincial election campaign, and during a time when the provincial firefighters typically undergo firefighting training exercises.

As fires burned across the province's north, some reports of arson emerged.

"I think you're watching as I am the number of stories about arson," Smith said on a podcast on Thursday. "I'm very concerned that there are arsonists, and there have been stories as well that we're investigating, and we're bringing in arson investigators from outside the province."

"We have almost 175 fires with no known cause at the moment."

Smith said fires are sometimes easy to trace, such as when caused by a railway accident, lightning, or campfires. But she said it's "unusual" to have so many fires with no known cause.

Mounties are currently searching for a suspected arsonist following a fire in a Grande Prairie back alley. Officers said witnesses reported seeing a man wearing all black with a white shirt around his shoulder lighting the fire and walking away from the scene.

A May 3 post from the Parkland County Twitter account said the fire department had

responded to four suspicious fires in the preceding five days on Highway 16, less than a 40-minute drive from the provincial capital of Edmonton.

“We are asking residents to report any suspicious behaviour to RCMP by calling 9-1-1,” the county wrote on Twitter.

We need your help! Our firefighters have responded to 4 fires in 5 days that appear to be intentionally set, north of Hwy 16 between Rge Rd 30 and Rge Rd 32. We are asking residents to report any suspicious behaviour to RCMP by calling 9-1-1. There is a full fire ban on. [pic.twitter.com/m4IVQOWOno](https://pic.twitter.com/m4IVQOWOno)

— Parkland County (@ParklandCounty) [May 3, 2023](#)

Smith said the government must do a better job of building fire guards so forest fires can’t jump into residential areas and cities. She said the province did a good job of working with local communities and accelerating fire guard prevention.

“We’re going to have forest fires, it’s the nature of what we have in Alberta,” she said. “And it’s our job as government to make sure that we mitigate, that we manage, and that we have the resources available when they do erupt.”

Some 72 wildfires were still ongoing in the province as of Thursday, down from over 100 earlier in the year. Wildfires have now started up in Quebec and New Brunswick, and in the US with millions of Americans and Canadians subject to harmful smoke levels.

Forecasters say 2023 could be the country’s worst wildfire season on record. It has already seen 2,214 fires this year, which have burned an area roughly totalling the size of Belgium.

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