

FIREFIGHTERS — CANADIAN DEPLOYMENT

Statement by Minister for Environment

MR R.R. WHITBY (Baldivis — Minister for Environment) [12.20 pm]: I also acknowledge the state treasures who have joined us in the Speaker's gallery today.

Western Australians need no reminder of the damage caused by bushfires. It is a threat that governments and communities meticulously prepare for each year. When our friends in other states or even overseas seek our assistance and expertise, we heed their call. I would like to take this opportunity to update the house on the current wildfire situation in Canada and the assistance that the Cook Labor government is providing the Canadian authorities during this very challenging time.

Sadly, this is shaping up to be Canada's worst wildfire season ever. Canada has experienced major wildfires in recent weeks, with more than 5.5 million hectares burnt to date. Currently, 453 fires are burning across the country, with new fires occurring on a daily basis. There have been three deployments of Western Australian firefighting specialists to Canada in recent weeks and this includes a 36-strong contingency of Western Australian firefighters and emergency services personnel from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Western Australian personnel are spending several weeks battling fires around Alberta and British Columbia, providing valuable support to Canadian authorities with their skills in frontline firefighting and complex incident management. Western Australian personnel are deployed for five-week blocks in Canada as part of the larger contingent from Australian and New Zealand fire agencies, coordinated by the Australasian Fire Authority Council's National Resource Sharing Centre.

On behalf of Minister Dawson and myself, I had the honour of expressing our gratitude to the team at the airport prior to departure. We should all be incredibly proud of our skilled firefighters and emergency services personnel who have chosen to help protect Canadian communities in their time of need. On behalf of the government and the Parliament, I wish all our firefighters and fellow Canadians well as they battle this national emergency.