

SOPFEU

Who is SOPFEU ?

Overlook of the 2023 season

Mutual aid and agreements

Lessons learned

What for the future?

Sylvain Guitard

Manager – International Partnership and
Interagency



NCSL

Military and Veterans Affairs Task Force

May 17, 2024





Canada, Province of Quebec, SOPFEU and CIFFC

In Canada, forest protection is the responsibility of the provinces and territories.



These one have created an interagency center, the CIFFC, to help them with each other and with others countries, coordinate the exchange of resources, standardize qualifications and training, and share new technology and scientific projects.

CIFFC is financed by the provinces/territories and has no authority over them. Its role is only to coordinate.

nationale
provinciale ou territoriale



SOPFEU's Mandate

SOPFEU is unique in its kind. Other protection agencies in Canada and around the world are similar, i.e. they are all part of a ministry, military or public emergency service. SOPFEU is mandated by the Government of Quebec to ensure the prevention, mitigation of risks, detection, and suppression of vegetation fires within its territory, as well as the protection of communities and strategic infrastructure throughout Quebec's forested areas.

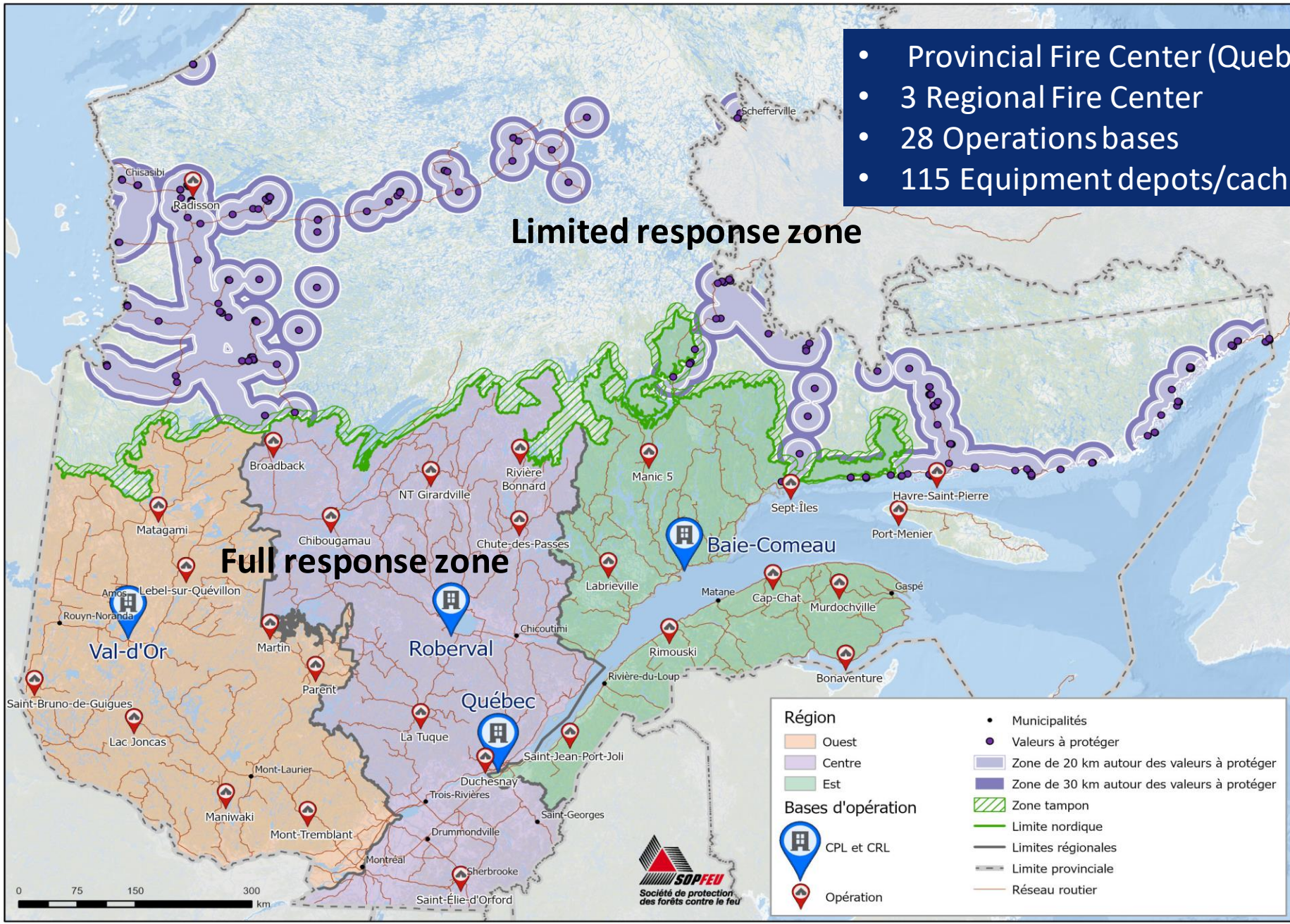
Although SOPFEU is funded by the Government of Quebec and other partners who have strategic interest, it is considered a private non-profit organization with its own board of directors.



Assignment of international resources and CAF.



- Provincial Fire Center (Quebec City)
- 3 Regional Fire Center
- 28 Operations bases
- 115 Equipment depots/cache



SOPFEU's Mandate

Mandate:

- Prevention: reduce the number of human-caused fires
- Détection: find fires under 0.5 ha
- Suppression:
 - Control the fires before 10h am the next day
 - Extinguish below 3.0 ha.



Our priorities

1. Protection of life and communities
2. Protection of essential infrastructure to public safety
3. Fires with the highest probability of success (meeting operational objectives)
4. Protection of forest values

Human Resources

In season, nearly 500 employees work for SOPFEU.

- 191 Regular employees
- 234 Seasonal forest firefighters
- 84 Seasonal non-firefighters (clerck, dispatch, admin, etc.)
- 593 Auxiliary firefighters
From 29 labour suppliers



Aircraft fleet



15 avions-citernes



27 avions de détection



10 avions d'aéropointage et transport



16 hélicoptères



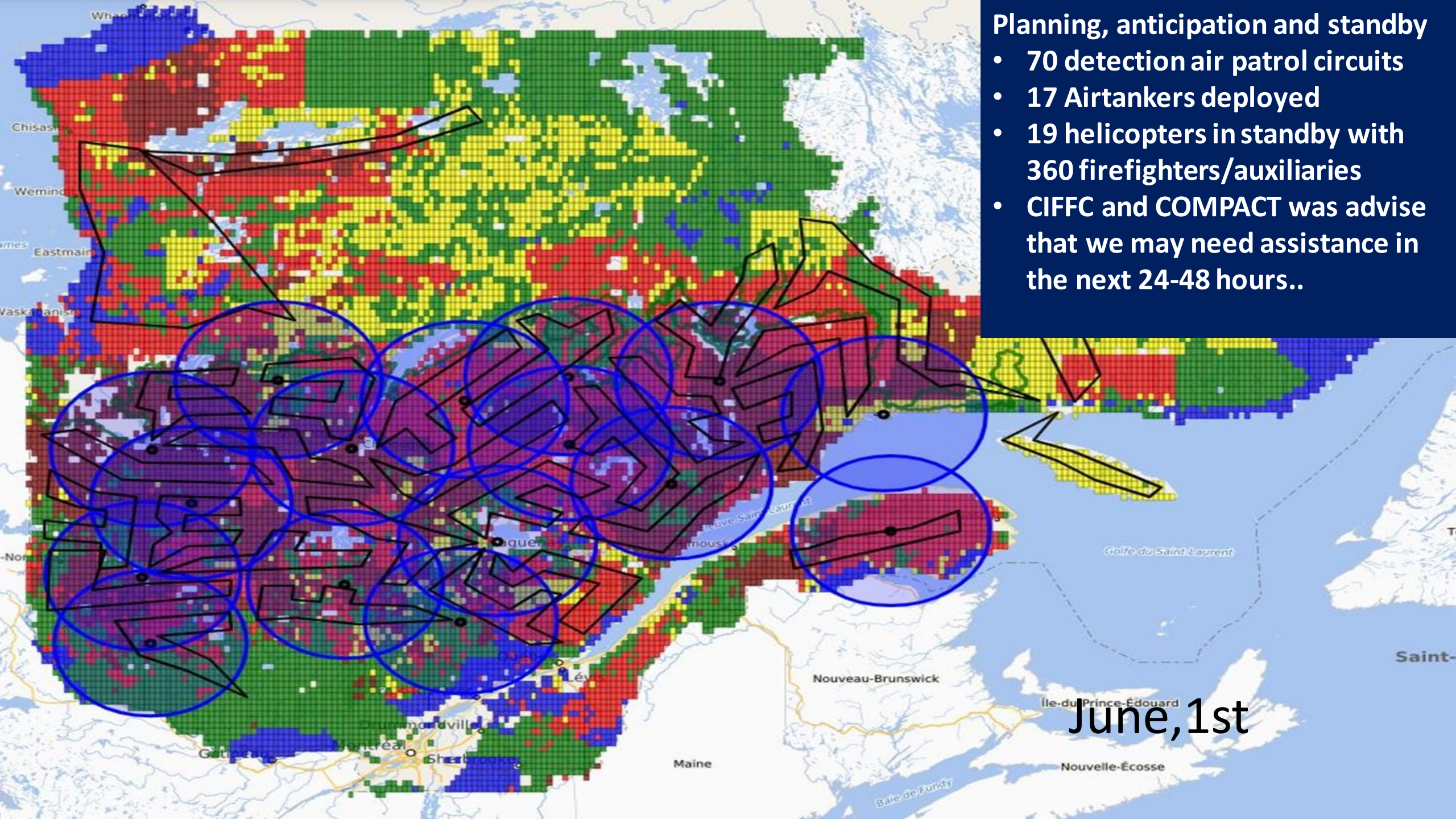
SOPFEU

A look back at the 2023 season



Planning, anticipation and standby

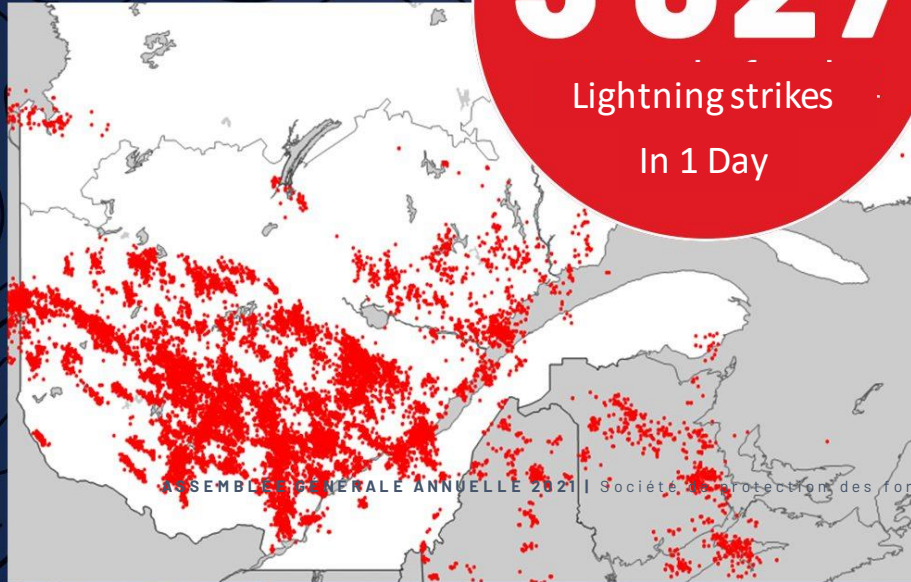
- 70 detection air patrol circuits
- 17 Airtankers deployed
- 19 helicopters in standby with 360 firefighters/auxiliaries
- CIFFC and COMPACT was advise that we may need assistance in the next 24-48 hours..



June, 1st

June 1: passage of a "dry" lightning front

⚡ Lightning strikes
June 1, 2023



3 027
Lightning strikes
In 1 Day

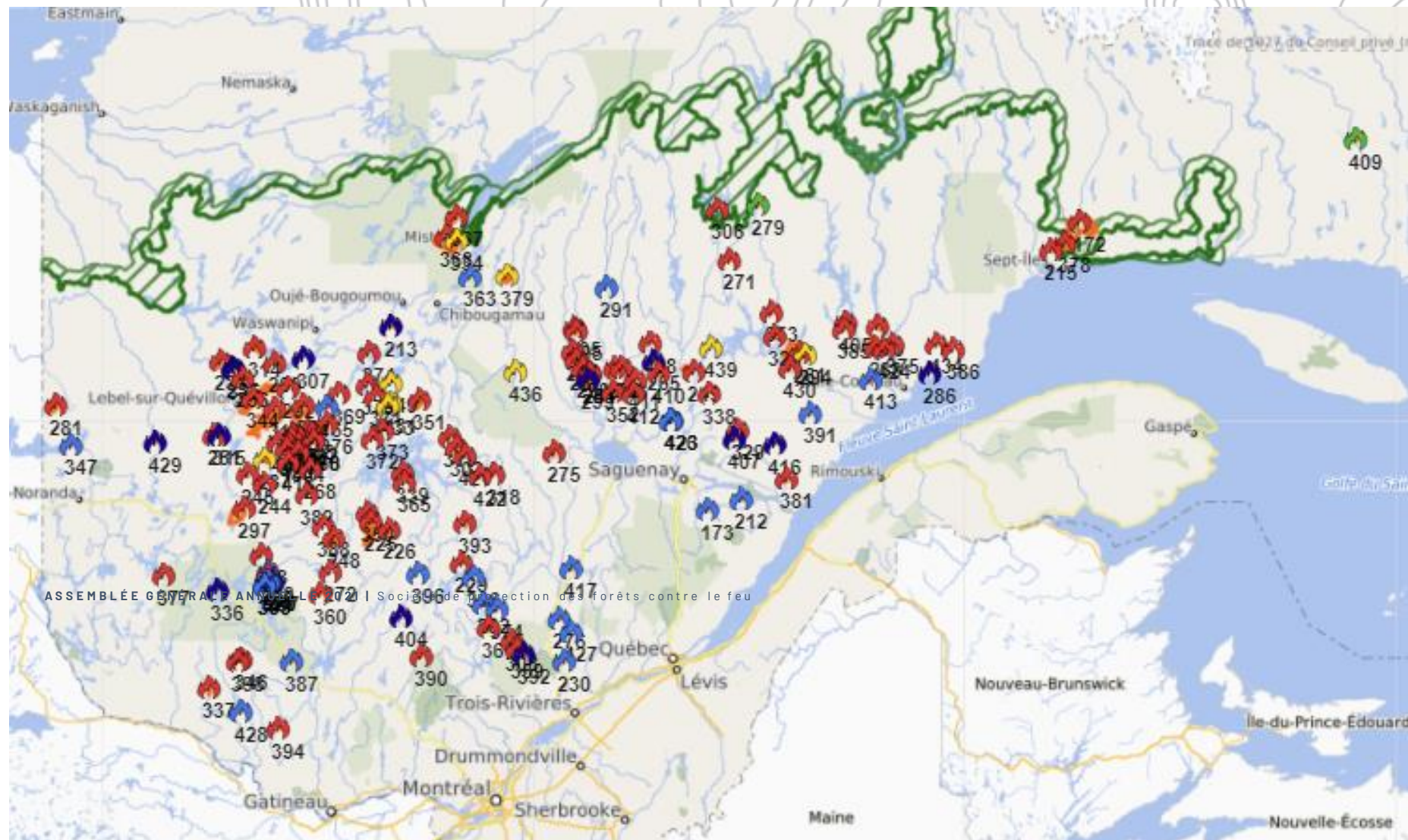
JUNE 1, 2023

122 NEW
FIRES

IN ONE DAY

⚡ **95%**
Caused by Lightning

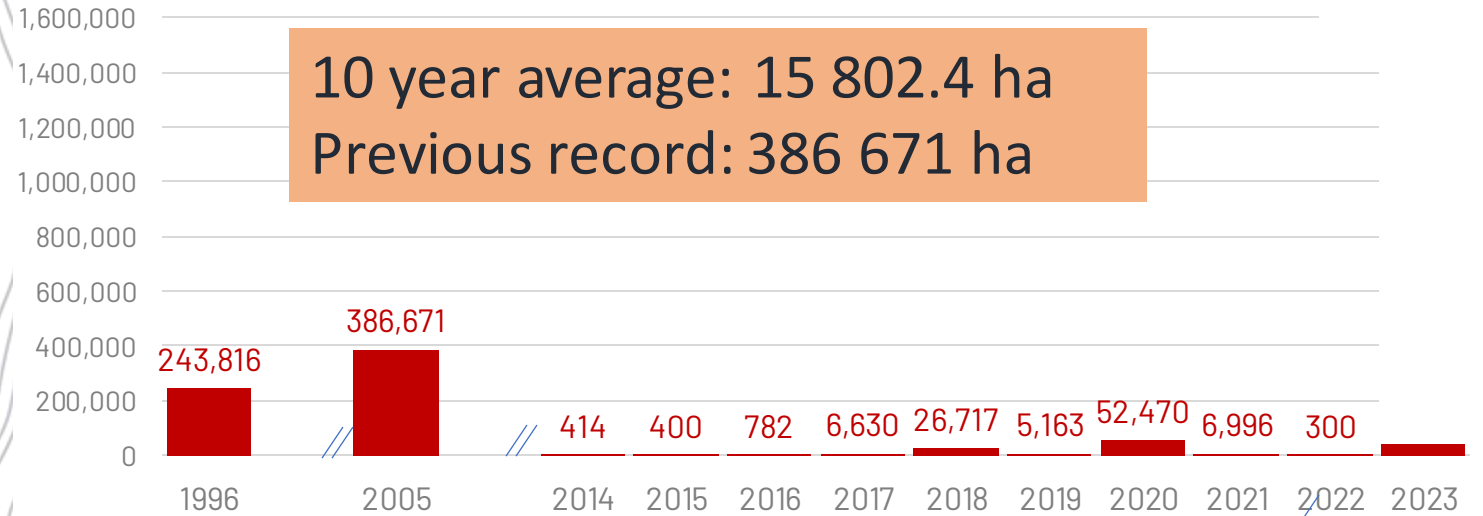
Situation on June 5, 2023



Area burned – 2023 vs previous years

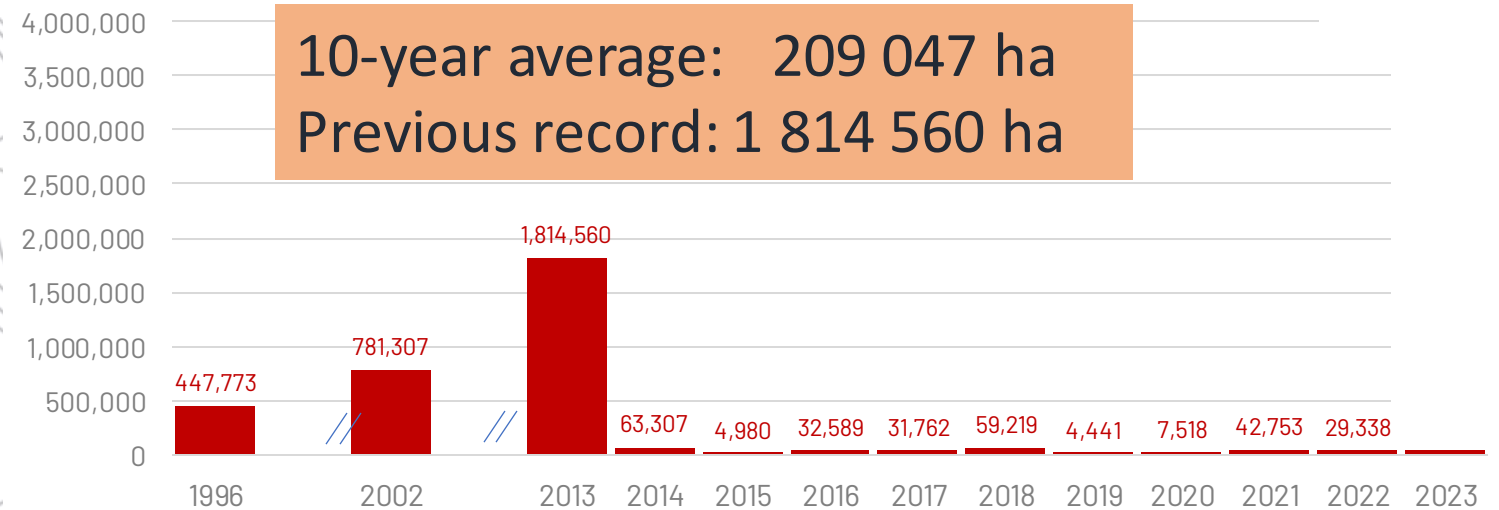
562 fires
1.43 M ha

Intensive zone

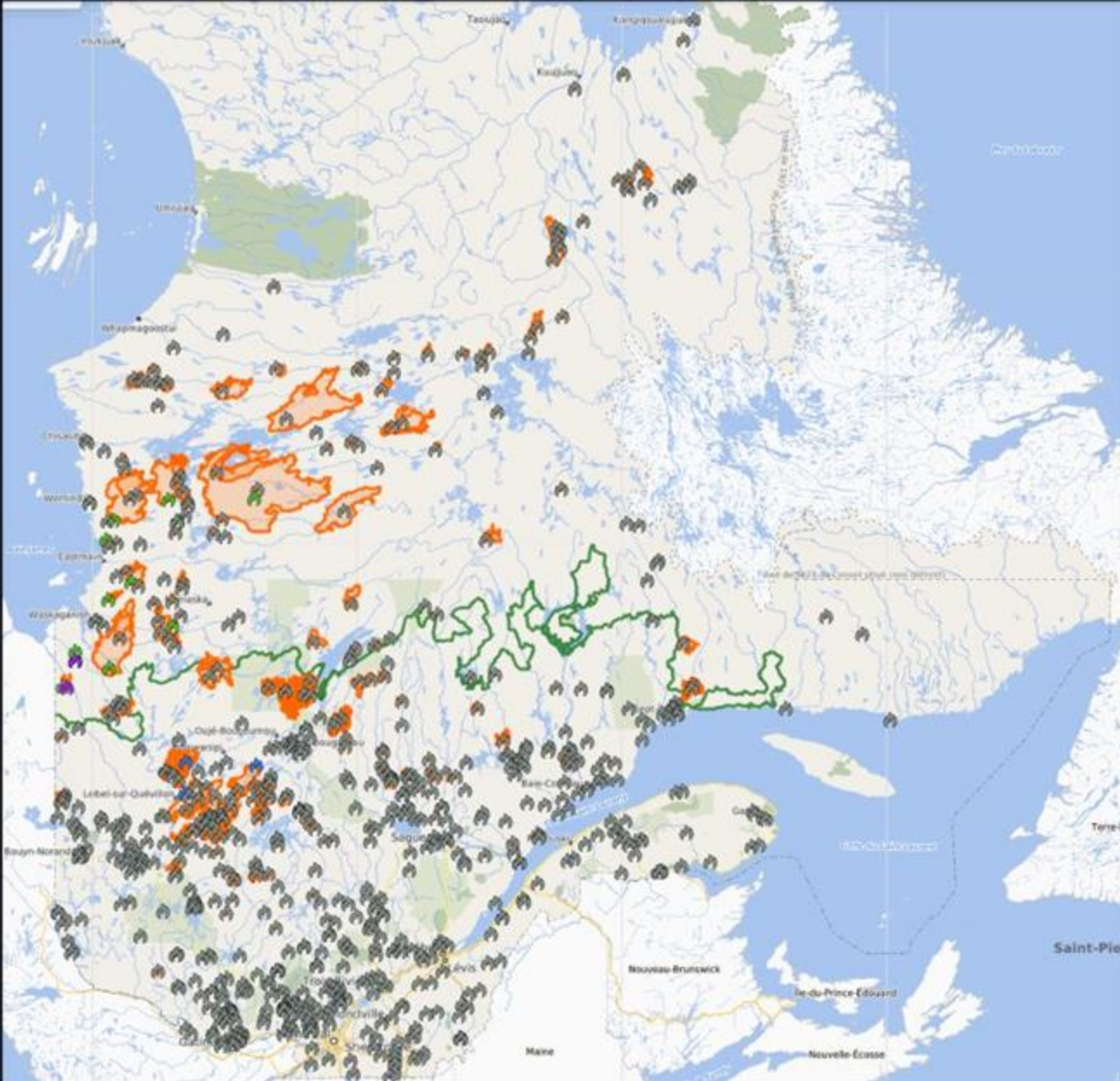


147 fires
3.78 M ha

Northern zone



2023 Seasonal Fire Distribution



- Throughout the province.
- Western areas particularly affected.

Bilan de 2023			
ZONE INTENSIVE	INCENDIES CETTE ANNEE	HECTARES AFFECTES	
	566	1,322,975.4	
ZONE NORDIQUE	MOYENNE 10 ANS A LA MEME DATE	MOYENNE 10 ANS A LA MEME DATE	
	438	15,815.2	
ZONE NORDIQUE	INCENDIES CETTE ANNEE	HECTARES AFFECTES	
	147	3,705,026.0	
ZONE NORDIQUE	MOYENNE 10 ANS A LA MEME DATE	MOYENNE 10 ANS A LA MEME DATE	
	45	209,046.7	

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Equivalent area burned in...

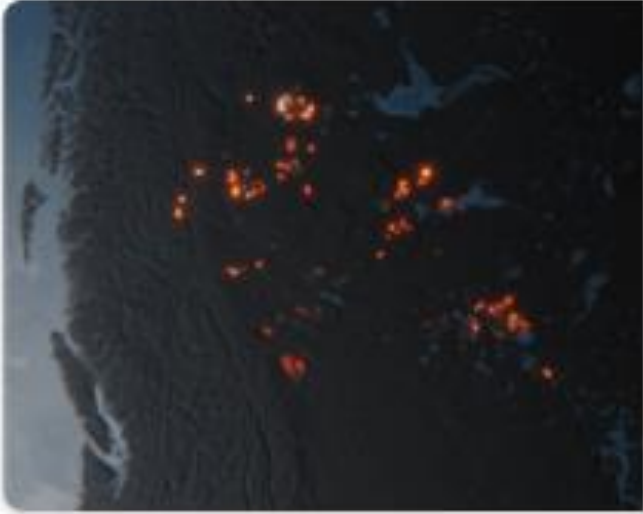
New England



Nova Scotia



COST: over than 225 M\$ suppression cost



2023 Canadian Wildfires Animation

2023

peteratwoodprojects.wordpress.com

<https://youtu.be/IVOfilQYupc?si=aYUjY-vZgEvTbNx7>

Communities under threat and evacuations

- Thirty municipalities and communities affected by evacuations
- Nearly 30,000 evacuees (max was in 1996 flood = 16 000)
- No loss of life, no primary residence or major strategic infrastructure destroyed

Evacuation summary

Nom municipalité	Nombre de personnes évacuées
Chapais	800
Ferland-et-Boilleau	40
Rivière-Éternité	30
Chibougamau	7 315
Eeyou Istchee Baie-James	379
Kitcisakik	382
La Reine	30
La Tuque	36
Lac-Rapide	206
Lac-Simon	2 009
Lebel-sur-Quévillon	2 000
Maliotenam	1 530
Mistissini	1 300
Normétal	845
Obedjiwan	472
Oujé-Bougoumou	1 000
Saint-Lambert	180
Senneterre	37
Sept-Îles	5 500
Val-d'Or	247
Waswanipi	748
Chisasibi	189
Eastmain	684
Eeyou Istchee Baie-James	111
Nemaska	135
Waskaganish	326
Wemindji	401
TOTAL	26 932

Desperate times call for desperate measures...



Prohibition of access to the forest

88 helicopters
21 airtankers
48 aircraft for transportation, birdogging, observation and detection
Total flight hours : 27 708
10 year average : 6 770

Ministère des
Ressources naturelles
et des Forêts
Québec
La sous-ministre

Le 9 juin 2023

Madame Julie Coupal
Directrice générale par intérim
Société de protection des forêts contre le feu
715, 7^e rue de l'Aéroport
Québec (Québec) G2G 2S7


Madame la Directrice générale par intérim,

Le ministère des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts est préoccupé par la situation actuelle des feux de forêt au Québec qui met à risque la sécurité de plusieurs de nos communautés forestières et celle des infrastructures s'y trouvant.

Dans ce contexte, nous vous rappelons qu'en vertu de l'article 187 de la Loi sur l'aménagement durable du territoire forestier (LADTF), la Société de protection des forêts contre le feu (SOPFEU) peut réquisitionner tout appareil nécessaire pour combattre un incendie forestier, quel qu'en soit le propriétaire. La SOPFEU doit accorder au propriétaire de tout appareil réquisitionné une compensation juste et raisonnable déterminée par la ministre des Ressources naturelles et des Forêts.

Par la présente, nous vous confirmons donc que vous pouvez dès maintenant et si nécessaire mettre en application cette directive afin de protéger nos communautés forestières et les infrastructures qui s'y trouvent.

Recevez, Madame la Directrice générale par intérim, nos salutations distinguées.


Line Drouin, avocate

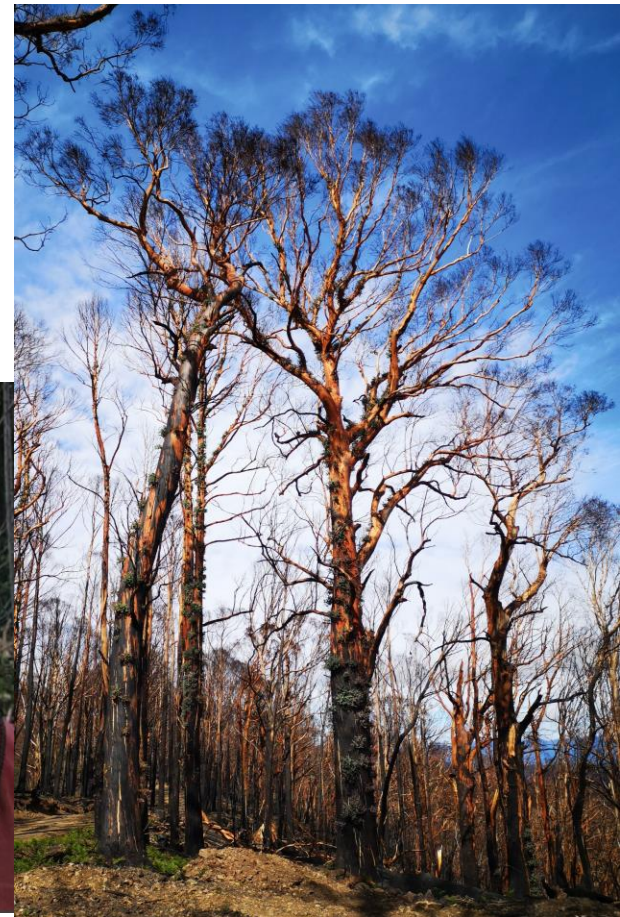
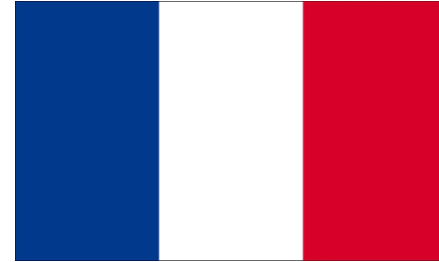
Legal requisition of all aircrafts



NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS



CANADIAN INTERAGENCY FOREST FIRE CENTRE INC.
CENTRE INTERSERVICES DES FEUX DE FORÊT DU CANADA INC.





NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES

National resources

NB, NS, PE, NL, YK, NWT, ON, PC, BC, CSF

Total: 104 Firefighters

(+40 single resources and overhead)

CAF

1000 militaires



International firefighters

United States: 490

France: 343

Portugal: 140

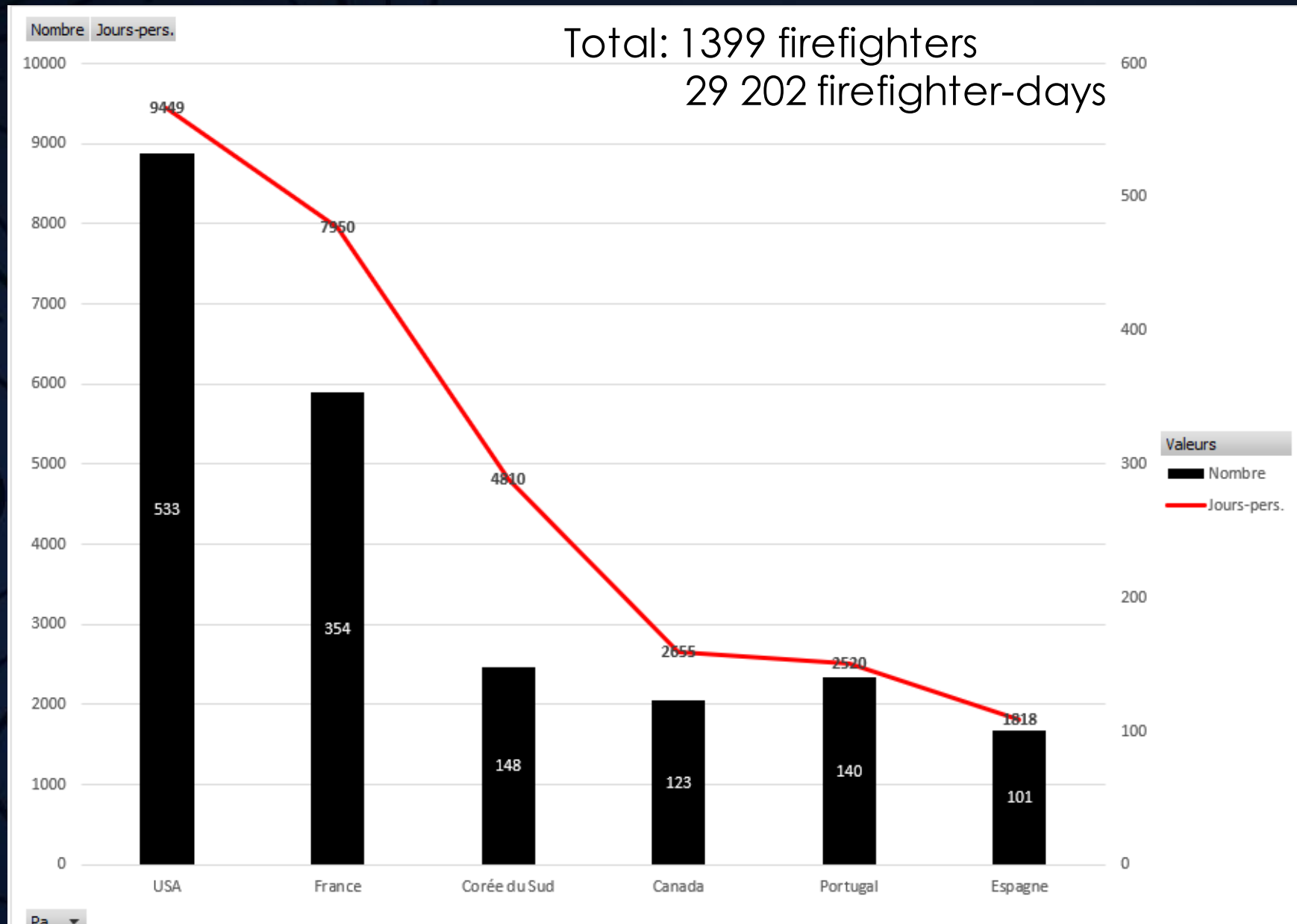
Spain: 100

South Korea: 140

Total: 1213 international firefighters

(+72 single resources and overhead)

Foreign firefighters to the rescue...



SOPFEU

Lessons learned





LESSONS LEARNED

- Organizational and operational structure needs to expand and grow. Fires are no longer managed in the same way as they were 20-30 years ago.
- Getting a clear and full mandate (like in the southern part) in our northern zone to protect communities and strategic infrastructure. Without a quick initial attack, fires become large too quickly and difficult to control after.
- Revision of our day rest period policy: 24/26 days in a row, 14 hours per days is too permissive. People are tired, less efficient, less alert, and the risk of accidents is higher.





LESSONS LEARNED

- We have little redundancy in our specialist staff and replacing them is very difficult. We should have started working on a rotation plan for them from the outset and taken steps earlier with our partners.
- Improve our communications with regional and provincial public safety structure.
- Improve our commitment to Fire Smart and Mitigation program.





LESSONS LEARNED WITH CAF

- Clarify rules of engagement.
- Training, assignment and safety.
- Work methods and organizational structure.
- CAF capacities and limitations.
- Communication channels.

"The help and support from the army has been important. Now we need to understand each other better and set up better communication channels to be efficient."



SOPFEU

What next in the future ?





WHAT'S NEXT IN THE FUTURE?

- SOPFEU restructured this winter to better fill its mission and be more robust.
- As part of a two-year plan, SOPFEU has committed to hiring around 160 more people, including 80 firefighters. That's just over 30% of its workforce!
- SOPFEU will migrate from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry to the Ministry of Public Safety in January 2025. This change reflects the importance of protecting Quebec's communities and strategic infrastructures across the province and is consistent with SOPFEU's mission and long term vision.





WHATS NEXT IN THE FUTURE?

- SOPFEU must maintain and improve its links with its partners around the countries and the world. A new department to this end have been created.
- Agencies cannot be self-sufficient in crisis situations. Mutual aid and cooperation is the key to the future. If not, they would need to commit and maintain far too many resources for a given period and considering that vegetation fire hazard is uneven across the years.
- In the context of climate change, the number of fires will increase, drying periods will be longer, more extreme and fires more intense.







ENSEMBLE,
PLUS FORT

