

**Elliott Engen**  
**State Representative**  
District 36A



# **Minnesota House of Representatives**

International Joint Commission  
1717 H Street NW, Suite 835  
Washington, DC 20006

Administrator Lee Zeldin  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Commissioners of the International Joint Commission and Administrator Zeldin,

In recent years, and notably in 2025, smoke from Canadian wildfires, particularly in Manitoba, has drifted south, triggering air quality alerts across Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. Over 20 million residents in the Midwest have faced restrictions on outdoor activities due to dangerous air quality, with communities reporting burning throats, respiratory issues, and reduced visibility. These conditions have disrupted summer recreation, harmed vulnerable populations, and strained public health resources. For example, in Willmar, Minnesota, residents have reported being unable to work or enjoy outdoor activities safely due to toxic air.

We are concerned that insufficient forest management and wildfire mitigation strategies may constitute negligence, exacerbating the transboundary impact on our states. The 2023 Canadian wildfire season, the worst on record, burned seven times the long-term average, and 2025 is projected to be among the most severe. Factors such as inadequate active forest management and delays in response to remote wildfires have been cited as contributors to the scale and intensity of these fires.

Under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909, the IJC has a mandate to address transboundary environmental issues, including pollution that causes injury to health or property across the border. We urge the IJC to investigate whether Canada's wildfire management practices meet the standards of due diligence required to prevent harm to U.S. residents. Specifically, we request:

- A comprehensive review of Canada's wildfire prevention, response, and mitigation strategies, including forest management practices and resource allocation for remote boreal forest fires.
- An assessment of whether Canada's actions align with its obligations under international agreements to prevent transboundary harm.

Additionally, we request that the EPA, under Administrator Zeldin's leadership, collaborate with the IJC to evaluate the public health and environmental impacts of Canadian wildfire smoke on U.S. states. Given the EPA's recent actions to address wildfire risks through revised Exceptional Events policies and prescribed fire allowances, we believe the agency is well-positioned to lead on this issue.

We ask that the EPA:

1. Conduct air quality impact assessments in Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, and Wisconsin to quantify the health and economic toll of Canadian wildfire smoke.
2. Engage with Canadian environmental agencies to advocate for stronger wildfire mitigation measures.
3. Explore regulatory or diplomatic mechanisms, such as those under the Clean Air Act, to address transboundary air pollution.

We respectfully request a response within 30 days outlining the steps the IJC and EPA will take to address this matter. Our constituents deserve clean air and the ability to enjoy their communities without the burden of preventable environmental harm. We stand ready to support collaborative efforts to resolve this issue and strengthen U.S.-Canada environmental cooperation.

Sincerely,



Elliott Engen  
Minnesota State Representative



Austin Harris  
Iowa State Representative



Claire Cory  
Senator, North Dakota Legislative Assembly



Calvin Callahan  
Representative, Wisconsin State Assembly