

Droughts and deluges in decades ahead

BY SAM COOPER, THE PROVINCE JUNE 22, 2009

Climate change in B.C. means the province is getting steadily hotter and wetter. Scientists have documented significant warming in recent decades and climate-change specialists are now modelling alarming environmental changes in the coming decades.

Rising heat will see an increase in extreme storms across the province. Summer droughts and heat waves are on the rise, with long-range predictions of up to 20 per cent less rain in some areas, such as the Okanagan.

It's predicted that, while winters and springs will get wetter and warmer, rain-and-snow days will be fewer and farther between. Intense deluges and dumps will become the norm.

A 2007 study, *Impacts to Adaptation: Canada in a Changing Climate*, expects the following weather changes in B.C.:

2020s: +1C; three-to-five-per-cent precipitation increase.

2050s: +2 to 2.5C; five-to eight-per-cent precipitation increase.

2080: +3.8 to 4C; eight-to-13-per-cent precipitation increase.

These changes will be gradual but will have profound effects by 2050, scientists say.

In 2050, Prince Rupert will have a climate like present-day Vancouver, they predict, and the average annual temperature in the Lower Mainland will be 13.1C, up from 10.1 in 2007.

A 2008 study, *Climate Change and Health in British Columbia* by the Pacific Institute for Climate Solutions, found that, between 1999 and 2002, extreme climate-related natural disasters cost B.C. an average of \$10 million per year.

This figure rose to \$86 million per year between 2003 and 2005.

Natural-disaster costs are predicted to rise further in the coming decades.

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