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It's not the heat, it's the (lack of) humidity

Parched fall amazes forecaster – rain storms happened 'all around us' but kept missing Toronto

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The warm and dry conditions throughout the GTA continue to topple marks in place for 50 to 60 years.

In some cases, all-time records are falling.

For instance, this fall is turning into the warmest September-October combination on record, according to Environment Canada senior climatologist David Phillips.

Factoring in the forecasts for the last two days of October, he expects September-October to record an average temperature of 16.1, exceeding the previous mark of 15.7 set in 1961.

October alone also looks like a record-breaker, with the average temperature expected to wind up at 14.1C, topping 13.6 in 1963.

But it is not the warmth drawing Phillips' attention.

Rather, it's the GTA's drought and he sees "no scientific explanation for it."

The local weather is cyclical and the arid span is not a result of global influences, he says.

"Storms have gone well south of us and north of us and all around us, but we've not seen the storms we have in the past," the climatologist said.

"You can't take one season or one year and suggest that is a result of climate change. One season does not a trend make."

However, the extreme variability of the Toronto seasons is a different story, he says.

Last fall was one of the wettest on record and now we're into one of the driest.

That kind of swing does pose concerns that may be related to climate change, he allows.

"But no one knows (for sure) and no one should put their reputation on the line saying that," he said.

Windsor and points north have been wetter than normal this year, Phillips said. Whereas locally, with no rain in sight for the rest of October, the first 10 months will rank as the GTA's second driest on record.

Since Jan. 1, Greater Toronto has received only 412.2 millimetres of rain, which is about two-thirds of normal levels. It was only slightly drier in 1958, when 411.3 millimetres of rain fell in the first 10 months.

But, according to Phillips, the current drought is more severe because it has been much warmer than in 1958. He refers to our pattern now as a "weather-free zone," ushered in by a lot of southerly air.

For the most part, urbanites are loving it, he said. Their home heating costs are being held down and their lawns are still green, Phillips states, although trees are thirsty.

If the GTA doesn't get a good soaking soon, that may mean more distressed trees and forests come spring, and lower lake and stream levels, which will affect fish habitats, he says.