



# WEATHER AND CLIMATE

## **Weather and Climate Day Websites Geography Awareness Week 2007 Canadian Association of Geographers**

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In the so-called “good old days”, weather was a popular or unpopular topic of casual discussion among Canadians in all regions of the country, mostly along such conversational lines as: Hot enough for ya? You think North Bay is cold? I’m from White River! No wonder Vancouver is green; it rains there about six months of the year! Best season yet for black flies in Flin Flon, eight months and counting. I’m getting depressed; will the clouds never leave New Brunswick? No doubt about it, best weather in Ontario is on Manitoulin Island. Yep, a tornado in northern Alberta, strangest thing I ever saw. Check out my geraniums, they might last until December right here on Cape Breton. How come people who live in the Snow Belt can’t learn to drive in snow? Apparently this Chinook is running from British Columbia right through to Labrador: ruined most of the outdoor rinks in Quebec and melted the ice on the Rideau Canal. Weatherwise, what a country.

As for the climate, it was seldom a lengthy dinner party topic: Yes, it’s cold in the winter in a lot of Canada. End of story.

Within the past several decades, however, a new and somber dimension has been added to our appreciation of the connection between weather, climate and geography. Phrases that point out this new aspect of the relationship include global warming, climate change, greenhouse gases, carbon trading credits, extreme weather events, receding glaciers, coastal flooding, modified ecosystems, the Kyoto Accord, thinning of the ozone layer, and doomsday scenarios. It appears safe to say, therefore, that on the surface Canadians will continue to muse and grumble about the weather, but they will be thinking deeper thoughts about the emerging and perhaps threatening combination of geography, weather, and climate that lies ahead.

As readers are no doubt aware, weather and climate courses are standard fare in many geography programs at the university level, and information along those lines is readily available from universities. By using the terms ‘geography and weather’ or ‘geography and climate’ in computer-based



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keyword searches, many of these programs can be readily identified. Indeed, many of them may be accessed via links to the university websites that are featured as part of Geography Awareness Week on the CAG website.

For the Weather and Climate Theme Day, however, our interest goes beyond what universities and colleges are doing. As part of the program to raise Canadians' awareness about geography, and the various participants in geographic education and practice, the website selection process focuses on non-academic, Canadian websites that explicitly make a connection between geography and weather and climate.

I believe that the websites listed below combine to present a very informative overview of the past, present and future connection between geography, weather, and climate in Canada. That said, if there are other websites that warrant recognition, then please call them to my attention. I look forward to receiving your suggestions via email at [wellarb@uottawa.ca](mailto:wellarb@uottawa.ca).

## Selected Weather and Climate Websites Weather and Climate Day

### *Canadian Meteorological and Oceanographic Society (CMOS)*

The following topics are among those in the contents of the CMOS website that are directly pertinent to Weather and Climate Day: [Climate Change \(2002\)](#); [Climate Change - 40th Congress, Toronto, 1 June 2006](#) ; [Comprehensive Position Statement on Climate Change, April 2007](#); [Kyoto Protocol](#); [Natural Hazards](#). Each section contains important insights into the geography, weather and climate relationship.

As visitors to the CMOS website will notice, the chapters are very active, and involve guest speakers on a regular basis. At the Ottawa chapter, for example, the introduction to the abstracts of presentations in 2007 contains the statement, "A key theme for 2007 is to demonstrate to Canadians throughout the country how geography affects the formation of weather systems; how weather systems are ..." (<http://www.cmos.ca/ottawapastspeakers.html>)

The abstracts are an excellent guide to key issues underlying the geography, weather and climate relationship in Canada and beyond its political borders, and to the researchers and policy officials investigating the relationships.



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The speakers and topics listed below are from the CMOS website, but I hasten to add that other speakers and topics for 2006 and earlier years are also available for the Ottawa chapter. Finally, to review the abstracts click any cell in the fourth column, and to send a speaker an email use the second column.

All in all, this is a very substantive contribution to increasing Canadians' awareness about the geography, weather, and climate relationship.

## Ottawa Centre / Past Speakers

### Centre d'Ottawa / Conférenciers passés

Date	Speaker / Conférencier	Affiliation	Title / titre and link to Abstract in language given
<b>2007/08</b>			
OCTOBER 11, 2007	<a href="#">David Grimes</a>	ADM MSC	<a href="#">Update on Environment Canada's Meteorological Service of Canada</a>
SEPTEMBER 26, 2007	<a href="#">Dr. Jim Gower</a>	Institute of Ocean Sciences, Sidney, B. C.	<a href="#">Strange Water Colours Mapped by the MEdium Resolution Imaging Spectrometer (MERIS)</a>
<b>2006/07</b>			
MAY 16, 2007	<a href="#">Philippe Crabbé</a>	Professor Emeritus, Institute of the Environment, University of Ottawa	<a href="#">Is the Economics of Climate Change Any Less Uncertain than its Physical Science?</a>
APRIL 5, 2007	<a href="#">Ken Denman</a>	Canadian Centre for Climate Modelling and Analysis, University of Victoria	<a href="#">The Fourth IPCC Assessment Report on Climate Change (AR4): Key New Findings and Key Science Issues</a>
FEBRUARY 15, 2007	<a href="#">Ron Stewart</a>	Professor, Department of Atmospheric & Oceanic Sciences, McGill University, Montreal	<a href="#">Waiting for Rain: The Science of Drought</a>
JANUARY 18, 2007	<a href="#">Dr. Barry Wellar</a>	Media Program Director, Canadian Association of Geographers	<a href="#">Making Weather Connections: From Science to Common Sense and Public Lethargy to Activism</a>



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## ***Climate Change North***

This entry from [Climate Change North | Curriculum | Yukon | Connections 12](#) is particularly appropriate to the Weather and Climate Theme Day: "...apply the following geography themes to relevant issues: ... pressure, and wind; explain the atmospheric conditions that create extreme weather phenomena ...” After re-visiting this material, I suggest that parents of school age children would be wise to give it a read and brush up on what young people are learning in regard to the connection between geography, weather, and climate.

## ***Environment Canada***

The description of [Canada Info: Geography & Maps: Geography Links](#) includes the observation “Canada has the most varied geography of any country in the world. This section contains Environment Canada weather forecasts, Canada's national parks...” Examination of the contents of the links not only reveals that the claim about Canada’s geography being the most varied in the world is accurate, it is probably an under-statement. Read all about it here.

## ***Government of Alberta***

The link **Geography and Weather** (<http://www.alberta.ca/home/90.cfm>) provides a very concise body of information about Alberta's weather, climate and geography. Similar websites are available for other provinces and territories, and provide an indication of the regard that these governments have for the relationship between geography, weather, and climate. As readers will appreciate, this kind of information is very instructive when assessing provincial policies, plans, programs, and pronouncements on such issues as climate change, global warming, carbon trading credits, the Kyoto Accord, and greenhouse gas emission standards.

## ***Government of Ontario***

For those who believe that Ontario peaches are the best in the world, and want to know why, look no further than [What You Should Know about Fruit Production in Ontario](#). As we are told, “The unique blend of climate, geography and soils found in certain areas of Ontario allow producers to grow a wide variety of top quality fruits. ...” As those familiar with the planning principle “highest and best use” are aware, that phrase is a premier reason why these unique agricultural lands, already in scarce supply in Ontario and Canada, should not be rezoned to residential, commercial, industrial, or other lower-order uses.



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## ***Government of Newfoundland and Labrador***

In **Stay Newfoundland: Newfoundland and Labrador**, it is written, “A land renowned for its independence and diversity, Newfoundland is home to a fascinating array of climates and weather. Its geography explains many of .... “. Residents and visitors alike will attest to the accuracy of this declaration about the geography, weather, and climate connection in Newfoundland and Labrador.

[www.staynewfoundland.ca/weather.php](http://www.staynewfoundland.ca/weather.php)

## ***Health Canada***

In the report, **First Annual National Health and Climate Change Science And Policy Research Consensus Conference - How Will Climate Change Affect Priorities For Your Health Science And Policy Research?**, it is noted that there is an “...inadequate understanding of full impacts of climate change on health. .... and of environmental factors other than climate (e.g. geography, rural vs. urban) ...” No doubt geographers will be working even more diligently in future to provide a better understanding of the role of geographic factors on both the cause and effect sides of the climate change equation.

[First Annual National Health And Climate Change Science And Policy...](#)

## ***Natural Resources Canada***

When you fit this agency into your website visiting schedule and find [SUSTAINING the ENVIRONMENT and RESOURCES for CANADIANS - Discovery](#), just follow the links to learn a great deal about relationships among geography, geology, weather, and climate at a national scale.

## ***Region of Waterloo***

The public service provided by this website is that it informs newcomers to Waterloo Region about the geography of the area, and the associated weather. It occurs to me that as a result of advances in GIS, and such ventures as Google Earth, a dynamic application of this kind in the offices of local governments could dramatically heighten public awareness of the relationship between geography, weather, and climate, and could even lead to a more informed citizenry in regard to issues involving water sources, supply and demand, restrictions on building schools on the downwind side of nearby roadways, parking restrictions for snow removal purposes, the design of tree planting programs, etc.

<http://www.newcomerswaterloo.ca/index.php?MenuItemID=217>



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## ***Saskatchewan Education***

**Eye on the Weather** is an education module that incorporates a number of concepts involving geography, weather, and climate, and investigates the relationship between cloud formation and weather. Again, parents might be well-advised to check out this website and others like it, because this is likely not the geography that was taught when they went to school. Moreover, this is a very good fall-back subject for adults who are not all that keen about homework involving functions.

## ***The Weather Network***

Attentive viewers of the Weather Network receive at least one implicit geography lesson with every report, and are invited to submit materials such as images of tornadoes, flood waters, snow drifts, sun bathers, frozen surfaces, crops, flowers, etc., for possible showing on the Network. So far, so good for a bit of interaction, but there could be more. Example: Has anyone used a Weather Network episode in a class assignment that challenges the students to explain how geography affected the weather story or perhaps the weather-related incident? Or, alternatively, what about using an episode to examine the geographical consequences of a weather event or series of events? Stay tuned, this kind of inquiry could be on the agenda for Geography Awareness Week 2008!

**[http://www.theweathernetwork.com/weather\\_centre/wcwxbutton](http://www.theweathernetwork.com/weather_centre/wcwxbutton)**