



*The Chadwicks  
(submitted by Phil Chadwick)*

# THE WHY'S OF WINTER with Phil the Forecaster

By Lorraine Payette

Every February, world famous groundhogs Punxsutawney Phil and Warton Willie come out of their cozy dens for a brief glance at the world. Their forecasts are shadowy at best, and they quickly duck back under cover to sleep away the rest of the winter.

Leeds and Grenville has its own predictor of all things weather who runs rings around them. Living quietly near Lyndhurst is the one and only Phil “the Forecaster” Chadwick... aka “Singleton Phil”.

He studied nuclear physics at Queen’s, but in graduation year, he saw an ad for the Atmospheric Environment Service on the bulletin board of Stirling Hall. Rather than grad studies in nuclear physics, a career as a meteorologist paid the bills. Weather is 24/7 and joining Environment Canada in 1976 and becoming a severe weather

meteorologist was the beginning of a great and productive career. After retiring in 2011, he went on to teach meteorology at the university level in Iceland, Sweden and Copenhagen, as well as doing the lecture circuit at home.

“I am a ‘weatherman’ – actually a meteorologist,” he says. “I have heard most of the jokes - and still enjoy them.” He also enjoys explaining weather phenomena.

Different phenomena have different effects on our global weather. El Niño was a major influence in 1998, resulting in exceptional conditions.

“I worked throughout the last memorable freezing rain,” he says. “Do you remember the ‘Ice Storm of 1998’? The warnings went out early and I didn’t get home for a couple of days. My own brother in Merrickville, Ontario, didn’t believe the forecast that 5

centimetres (2 inches) or more of ice, would accumulate on surfaces. Any amount of ice on roads is serious but 5 centimetres adding weight to structures is beyond the design of almost everything. No forecast could have prevented the freezing rain from happening but many might have saved themselves some anguish if they had bought backup supplies and a generator.”

He explains the weather we’ve experienced lately as “climate change”, often referred to as global warming. It involves significant changes in heat, humidity, precipitation and all other things covered by climate. Water levels in particular are seriously affected, with too much water in some areas and not enough in others. Temperatures swing dramatically between hot and cold, and the entire biosphere is affected.

Since the 1970s, we’ve gone up about 0.6°C and current science says that if we go up a full two degrees, we won’t be able to recover. By the end of the century, if nothing changes, we’ll be up 6-8 degrees, and there will be no way to go back.

Many of us remember the Arctic Vortex that settled in over James Bay and refused to move. What most of us didn’t know was that it remained stationary, and was there all summer as well.

“We didn’t have a nice warm summer like we used to have when we were kids,” he says. “We had storm after storm after storm because we were underneath this cold trough. It’s been there for more than nine months.” **LH**

