

Bill Rea ? Six months, we'll complain it's cold

There are those who will open sentences with the words "I hate to say I told you so."

Since I like to think of myself as an honest man, I try to avoid using those words. The reason is, like most of you, I love being able to say "I told you so."

It offers a great feeling of vindication, of justification, of validation. In even more simple terms, it's just nice to be proven right for a change.

I've thought that a lot over the last week or so, as I've heard people complain about the excessive heat. And you have to admit, things did get very hot around here over a couple of days.

I was reminded of the complaining I heard six months ago, when we were all freezing in that winter of recent and dubious memory. We didn't get the ice storm we had the year before, and there were relatively few mornings when I had to get up early to shovel the driveway. But it was cold, wasn't it? And I heard plenty of people complaining about it.

"Six months from now, we'll be complaining about the heat," I would remind some of these people, and usually get staunch denials in return.

"I never complain about the heat," some of them would tell me, sometimes indignantly.

I think about those occasions during summer heat waves. I've heard people complaining, and I sometimes suggest they cast their thoughts back about six months.

The fact is I'm not terribly great when it comes to extreme heat or extreme cold. Okay, call me hard to please!

The thing is cold is relatively easy to deal with. If the situation requires it, put on more layers. They can be removed if the situation justifies it.

The only thing that really bothers me about winter is the heavy snow. If memory serves, this past winter included one major dumping that took me a couple of hours to clear (at my age too). Ironically, we usually get hammered during the first week of February, which is also when my birthday falls. The presents I consistently get from Mother Nature leave a lot to be desired. And since I have to do a lot of driving in my job, I prefer roads that are clear of the white stuff. On the other hand, I have learned over the years how to drive in adverse conditions. But it never pays to get too uppity, does it?

And there's always a little apprehension on really cold winter mornings as to whether the car will start. Things worked out reasonably well for me this winter, although the battery in my wife's car started showing attitude at inopportune times. But we got through it.

Lest you get the wrong idea, I'm not a big fan of freezing, thus like so many of you, I eagerly look forward to the warmer weather. But dealing with heat is a different matter. For one thing, one can only toss so many layers before running out. And then there might be legal implications (I don't know for sure and I have no desire to find out the hard way).

I can handle hot temperatures as well as the next man, assuming men (or women for that matter) can really handle it.

I do find standing out in the hot sun for prolonged periods drains one's energy pretty quickly, and thoroughly. There have been lots of times when I've returned to the office after covering some outdoor event in a heat wave, and about the only thing I've felt like working on was a nap.

But there are precautions that can be taken against the heat, and I usually take them, and I am sometimes amazed that there are others who don't.

For example, there were a number of assignments in the last week that required me to be out in the hot sun for a long time; on the order of hours in some cases. There were others at these events too. In one case, those in attendance came close to numbering 100. It's normally possible to find shade on such occasions, but not always. Yet I'm surprised at the number of people who don't wear hats to protect their noggins from the heat.

I carry a baseball cap in my car just about all the time. It's from Caledon Fire and Emergency Services, and I will grant that it's getting a bit worn. On the other hand, the protection from the heat that it provides takes precedence. And if I know I'm going to be under the sun for a prolonged period, I make sure it's on my head.

There was an occasion about 10 years ago when I was working in another community, and I took part in a tour of the lands being eyed for a subdivision (which has since been built). It was in what then was a farmer's field on a blistering hot day. There were four of us doing the tour; a high-ranking representative of the developer, one of his senior planners and two representatives of the media. Somewhat to my surprise, I was the only member of that quartet who was wearing a hat. That's a rather crucial point, because as the tour was winding down, both the developer's rep and my competition were showing signs of distress. Indeed, I ended up having to steer my competitor back to her car.

She later thanked me, joking that I might have been worried that I would have had to carry her. I replied by asserting my belief that she was not about to start carrying me.

As well, I usually carry a supply of sunscreen with me.

There are also matters of keeping one's self hydrated.

I received a bit of a lesson in that regard during the recent Pan Am Games in Palgrave. Unless they had paid a hell of a lot of money, people attending the equestrian events sat in stands that were not covered. VIPs got to sit in the shade. I once wandered close to the VIP area, out of curiosity if nothing else, and was promptly directed to do a very quick about-face (I should also point out that the media had easy access to a well shaded area, but that was not always the best spot from which to take action photos). The point is most people attending the various competitions had to sit out in the open.

People attending the games were allowed to bring water bottles with them, but not water. Security personnel inspected all bags, including my camera bag, and since my water bottle was not sealed, I was obliged to dump it all into the sand before I could pass through. From their point of view, I guess they had no way of knowing whether I was trying to sneak in a bottle filled with vodka. But on the positive side, there were stations on the site at which people could fill their bottles at no cost. I availed myself of the service frequently. And there were lots of people with the same idea. There was often a line-up to fill bottles.

Of course, there's an easier way to deal with heat. Find an air conditioned room and wait until winter. Then you can complain about the cold.

