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Mercury Hit All-Time Winter High in Canada

An environmental agency says the balmy temperatures may be a sign of global warming.

From the Associated Press
March, 14 2006

TORONTO — The winter of 2005-06 has been Canada's warmest on record and the federal agency Environment Canada said Monday that it was investigating whether it was a sign of global warming.

From December through February, which is considered meteorological winter, the country was 3.9 degrees above normal — the warmest winter season since temperatures were first recorded here in 1948.

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Environment Canada climatologist Bob Whitewood said it smashed the previous record set in 1987 by 0.9 degrees.

"We saw it coming from mid-January on that we were seeing something quite remarkable," Whitewood said.

The experience has been similar in the United States, where the National Climatic Data Center said the winter had been the fifth warmest on record.

It was especially balmy in the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as the Northwest Territories, where

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temperatures were 6 to 8 degrees above normal.

Whitewood said the last 10 winters had been warmer than normal and along with this winter reflect a trend that could be explained as global warming. The climatologist said Environment Canada would spend the next year examining the data to see if it was an aberration or evidence of a trend.

Although some Canadians have been delighted by the milder winter, many are disappointed about thinner ice for ice skating and hockey and less snow at the ski resorts.

Several islands off Nova Scotia were inundated by thousands of pregnant seals forced to give birth on shore by unusually mild weather that has prevented the Gulf of St. Lawrence from freezing.

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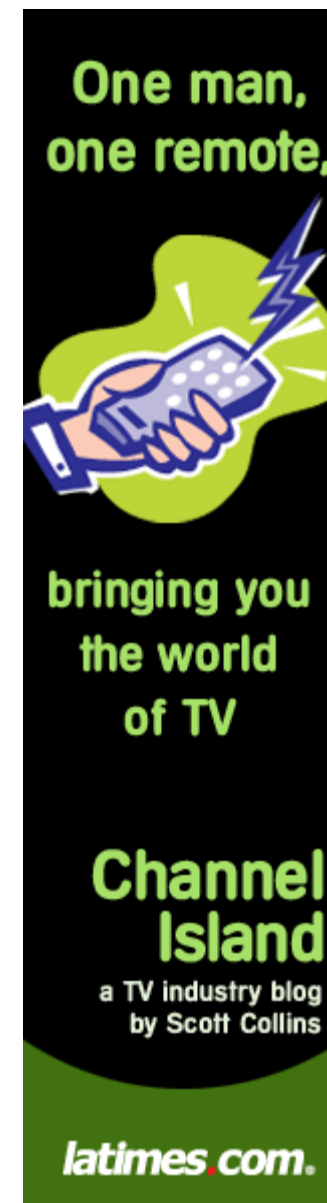
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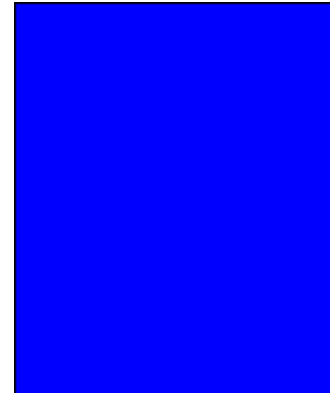
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