

Can We Please Have Summer Back

By Are We There Yet



Almost spring at the park

It is now officially spring. The birds are singing, flowers are poking their heads through freshly rained-upon dirt, and the air smells good, right? Wrong. As I look out my kitchen window, all I see is white. It's Montreal. And it's snowing.

Why is it still snowing?

It's too much. While I'm all for having different seasons, and yes, winter can be wonderful, there comes a point where it is simply too much. It's fun in the beginning – the first snowfall is always magical. Streets and landscapes are transformed, sounds are softened and the air is crisp and fresh. Excitement builds as parks turn into giant tobogganing hills and kids are brought to school on sleds. Christmas lights start to go up all around the city and everything is twinkling and beautiful and different.

But just like anything that happens all the time, after a while it isn't different anymore. Months

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go by, and the magic turns to drudgery. Snow is ground into grey slush by passing cars. The continuing cycle of cold – warm (read warmer than minus 20) and then cold again creates banks of impenetrable ice covered in slippery layers of snow, blocking your way to streets, doorways or anywhere else you need to go that involves going outside. Which is everywhere. It takes half an hour to put on all the snow gear before you go out, and another half hour to take it all off when you get in. And even the best, top-of-the-line gear doesn't completely block out the wind that slices through you, coming at you from all directions at once and mercilessly freezing your eyelashes while driving more snow into your eyes. You brace every muscle in your body to try and keep in the warmth.

You start to hate shovels. You've got one everywhere. There's one by the front door, to shovel your way out of the gate. There are two in the car, a smaller one for under the wheels, and a larger one to shovel your way out of your parking spot, then into your next parking spot, and then out of that spot again when it's time to leave and go back home, where you can shovel your way back to your front door.

Doing the penguin dance

The penguin dance becomes very popular. Not on purpose, but out of necessity. You're walking/clumping/sliding down the street and you think you see a friend. As you get nearer, you're not sure. They look just like you. Then again, everyone looks just like you. Enormous mukluks, a giant winter coat, mittens that resemble boxers' gloves, a neck-warmer pulled up to your eyes, a hat pulled down to your eyes, sunglasses over your eyes to block the wind and glare, a fur-trimmed, icicle-covered hood, and a scarf the size of your grandmother's knitted quilt holding the whole thing together. You wave, or try to, but it's hard to move your arms stuffed into several layers of sweaters under your coat. Once close, both of you bend forward like penguins, not moving your heads too much. Any excess head movement is bad. It will loosen the layers of clothing and let the evil ice wind in. You peer at each other, through the

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coats and the scarves and the sunglasses and have a relaxed, easily-understood conversation, which goes like this:

Person one, peering forward: “Muffle muffle muffle?”

Person two, head bobbing: “Muffle muffle muffle muffle muffle.”

This is followed by desperate pointing to the nearest café, post office, grocery store or whatever else that’s close, where you both unwrap several layers and discover who you’ve been talking to.

Winter should really just be called dating surprise. You never know who you can end up talking to.

We make the best of it. We walk down to the local parks and skate for free on the frozen ponds. We go sledding with friends on the mountain in the middle of the city and laugh all the way down the hills. We cozy up on the couch and watch snowstorms through the windows after making ice castles outside. But oh, how good it would feel to just be able to open the door and go outside with no fuss, no frigid air.

My five year old now collects post cards with flowers on them. She stares at them longingly and sighs: “Mommy, I love summer. I *need* summer. Can we have it back?”

Yes, can we please have summer back?

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Spring skating