

Daylight saving time: Alberta biological rhythm expert raises alarm over proposed permanent switch

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As the province launches a survey to gauge Albertans' feelings about ditching twice-yearly clock changes, one expert in biological rhythms warns **the survey leaves off a better option.**

University of Calgary psychology professor Michael Antle says the two options the survey presents — keep changing the clocks twice a year or move to permanent daylight saving time (DST) — omits a third choice of going to permanent standard time.

"It's the permanent standard time that's the evidence-based ones that people who study biological rhythms all over the world are endorsing," Antle said.

"I think people are really frustrated with spring-forward, fall-back and would like to get rid of it, but they haven't been presented with the full slate of options and haven't been informed of the pros and cons of each of them."

Alberta's survey mirrors the one released by British Columbia this summer, which provided the same two options. That survey revealed 93 per cent of respondents wanted to move to permanent DST, which led to that province introducing legislation to stop changing the clocks.

Most of Saskatchewan does not observe time changes, instead effectively staying on DST year-round. Several American jurisdictions, including California and Washington, also plan to move to DST year-round.

Service Alberta Minister Nate Glubish says it's for these reasons that the province chose DST instead of standard time for a year-round solution.

"Over the last couple of years we've seen a number of other provinces, territories and U.S. states starting to move in the direction of standardizing and getting off of the system of



Dr. Michael Antle, Professor at University of Calgary Department of Psychology, poses for a photo in his office on Thursday, November 21, 2019. Azin Ghaffari/Postmedia Calgary *AZIN GHAFFARI / AZIN GHAFFARI/POSTMEDIA CALGARY*

changing the clocks twice a year,” he said. “The important thing is that we don’t get out of step with our neighbouring jurisdictions, and almost all of these jurisdictions moving in this direction are choosing to standardize onto daylight saving time.”

But Antle says following the grain would ignore evidence that **all-year DST has negative effects on health.**

Most people live on the same social clock, he says, but **biological clocks need to follow the sun. Permanent DST would make for a later sunrise, which Antle says is linked to shorter sleeps and higher rates of illnesses including diabetes.**

In one of the most dramatic cases, **a December sunrise in Grande Prairie would take place at 10:19 a.m.**

“If we go to permanent daylight saving time, we still have to get up at 7 a.m. and go to work,” he said. “We call that ‘social jetlag.’ **The bigger the difference between what your body wants you to do and what your boss wants you to do, the more health consequences there are.**”

The effect would be compounded by the fact that Alberta is in the western part of the mountain time zone, Antle said, something he says is “catastrophically bad” for Albertans.

Glubish says that while the province plans to act in step with other jurisdictions, he won’t close the door on any options while the survey is ongoing.

“Right now, it would be premature to presuppose what the results of the survey will be, and the survey is the first step in a process,” Glubish said. “We’ll determine our next step after the survey has concluded and we’ve had time to review the results.”

The online survey remains open (<https://www.alberta.ca/daylight-saving-time-engagement.aspx>) until Dec. 10. If the province did decide to alter time, it would require an amendment to the Daylight Saving Time Act.

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