

Standard time better for public health, B.C. researchers say

B.C., Yukon wait for U.S. states to make daylight time permanent

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As B.C. formally gets in line to join the west coast of North America in choosing to switch to year-round daylight time, university researchers are telling the provincial government it's the wrong way to go.

Medical, psychological and sleep researchers at Simon Fraser University and University of B.C. say year-round standard time is better than daylight time, the experts said in an open letter to the B.C. government Thursday. They warn that staying on daylight time in winter reduces morning light, which has negative health and safety effects for children and adults.

"If daylight saving time is kept year-round, sunrise would be later in the winter, leading to decreased exposure to morning sunlight," the researchers say, adding that experts in biological rhythms and sleep "unanimously agree" that standard time year-round is better.

"Our body's internal biological clock needs exposure to morning light," the letter emphasizes. "When exposure to sunlight in the morning is reduced, our biological clock drifts later, making it harder to wake up and causing an increased mismatch between the body clock and local time (a condition known as social jet lag)."

B.C. Attorney General David Eby introduced legislation Thursday to adopt daylight time permanently, but he and Premier John Horgan have repeatedly said they will not move ahead without Washington, Oregon and California to maintain economic and social ties. Yukon Premier Sandy Silver agreed to support the move at a meeting with Horgan in late September.

The annual "fall back" to standard time goes ahead as usual this Sunday, and next spring's "spring forward" will also go ahead on March 8, 2020.

Premier John Horgan said Thursday that B.C.'s legislation allows the province to go either way, and the overwhelming public opinion is that they want to stop changing their clocks twice a year. The Peace River region already uses daylight time year-round, putting the northeast on B.C. time in summer and Alberta time in winter. Parts of the Kootenay region use mountain time, synchronizing with Alberta all year round.

The letter is signed by Simon Fraser University sleep researcher Myriam Juda; Najib Ayas, an associate professor of medicine at the UBC's sleep disorders program; Judy Village, adjunct professor of UBC's school of population and public health; Raymond Lam, a psychiatry professor and depression researcher at UBC; and Ralph Mistlberger, director of the sleep and circadian neuroscience lab at SFU.



B.C. Premier John Horgan and Yukon Premier Sandy Silver (right) hold meetings in Whitehorse, Sept. 30, 2019, where they agreed to coordinate a shift to daylight time with western U.S. states. (B.C. government)

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