

A Proposal to Change Newfoundland and Labrador's Time Practices

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Proposal

This paper proposes that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador enact, at the earliest possible date, legislation to advance Newfoundland Standard Time by one-half hour. Some of the advantages to the Province of doing so are outlined in this paper.

Background

In 1988, the provincial government of the day introduced Double Daylight Saving Time to the province as a whole to maximize the summertime daylight for residents, but discontinued the practice after one season because of a small but focused negative reaction. Some relevant and interesting aspects of the 1988 experiment include:

1. Polls at the time indicated that more than 70% of the residents of the island portion of the Province favoured Double Daylight Saving Time.
2. Western Labrador, which did not benefit significantly from Double Daylight Saving Time because the summer evenings were already somewhat longer than on the island, did not demonstrate the same high level of support.
3. Negative reaction on the island (less than 30% of residents) came primarily from two sources:
 - a) some parts of the business community, which complained of having the portion of the workday during which they could interact with other time zones on the North American continent reduced by one hour (Interaction time with other parts of the world such as Europe was actually increased by one hour, but a substantial portion of business here is conducted with other parts of North America); and
 - b) some parents of small children who complained of having difficulty getting their children to go to bed at scheduled bedtimes because it was still light outside.
4. A fact that was little publicized at the time is that the practice of regular Daylight Saving Time was saving residents of the Province millions of dollars in electrical and fuel costs each year. Continuation of Double Daylight Saving Time would have increased those savings substantially. With the current high electrical and fuel costs and the projected increases that the Muskrat Falls project will introduce, this is a far more significant factor today than it was in 1988, particularly for seniors and others on fixed incomes.

Benefits of Advancing Newfoundland Standard Time by One Half Hour

Double Daylight Saving Time was one of six options considered in the government's 1987-88 *Green Paper on Changing Newfoundland and Labrador's Time Practices*. One of the Time Change options under consideration was to advance Newfoundland Standard Time by one-half hour, and then apply the usual Daylight Saving Time.

The advantages of adopting that option are substantially greater and more relevant today than they were in 1988. Some of the advantages are:

1. The increased evening daylight time would be experienced all year long within the Newfoundland Time Zone.
2. There would be significant economic benefit in the form of savings to fuel and electrical costs, a particularly important consideration for the elderly and others on fixed incomes. Fuel and electrical costs are significantly higher today than they were in 1988, and the projected increases in the cost of electricity resulting from the Muskrat Falls project makes this a much more critical factor than ever.
3. Workers and students would enjoy an additional half hour of daylight, warmth, and leisure time after work and school each day.
4. Those involved in recreational and sporting activities, who were particularly positive about Double Daylight Saving Time in 1988, would benefit (no softball or soccer games cut short because of darkness, enough time to finish 18 holes of golf before dark, adequate time to conclude a relaxing barbecue in the sun rather than in darkness, more time for after-supper walks, longer evening gardening time, more time for evening fishing, etc.).

Given that we are the oldest and most rapidly aging population in the country, there would undoubtedly be far more beneficiaries of extended evening daylight time now than there were in 1988 (more retirees, more fishers, more golfers, more golf courses, more walkers and hikers, more walking and hiking trails, etc.). Nearly 110,000 residents of the province are 65 years or older, representing more than 20% of the population. In 1988, less than 53,000 residents, representing 9% of the population, were 65 or over.

5. The tourism industry would also benefit from extended evening daylight and warmth; more and longer evening activities could be scheduled.

Other Factors to Consider

1. Advancing Newfoundland Standard Time by one-half hour and then applying Daylight Saving Time would shorten the workday time for local businesses to interact with other parts of North America by half an hour rather than the full hour

- of Double Daylight Saving Time. This might prove to be palatable to the business community and, in any case, the economic, recreational, and social benefits to the general public should outweigh the business community's need to adapt to the loss of half an hour to conduct business with other parts of the continent.
2. A one-half hour time change might also be more acceptable to parents of young children concerned about getting their children in bed at scheduled bedtimes. In any case, the issue is less significant now than it was in 1988 because there are far fewer young children in the province now than there were at that time. To illustrate, there are nearly 40,000 fewer children under 10 years of age in the province today than there were in 1988. Only 9% of our population today are under 10 years of age compared to about 16% in 1988.
 3. Newfoundland summers arrive later than in many parts of the world. It's usually mid-July or later before it feels like summer has begun here. By that time, our days have been getting shorter for nearly a month. By mid-August, when we typically have our best summer weather, the days are already 100 minutes shorter than at the beginning of summer. The sun sets almost an hour earlier but still rises before 6:00 AM.

Few people stop to realize that the warm days of mid-August are the same length as the days of late April. Moving half an hour of that late summer early morning daylight to the evenings would allow residents of the island and coastal Labrador to get more enjoyment out of the best summer days we get. Other northern latitude regions experience more evening daylight than we do. In much of Scandinavia, the sun will set about half an hour later than in St John's. In Oslo, Paris, and Madrid, it will set approximately an hour later. People in those cities enjoy and appreciate long daylight evenings.

4. Since Western Labrador is not in the Newfoundland Time Zone, it would not be affected by advancing Newfoundland Standard Time. Its Standard and Daylight Savings Time practices would continue as at present.

Conclusion

In view of the factors outlined above, now would be an opportune and appropriate time in our history for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to enact legislation to advance Newfoundland Standard Time by one-half hour. If Government has reservations or uncertainties regarding public reaction to such a change, the adjusted time zone could be introduced as a pilot project for a period of two years, or even one year, after which time the public response to the change could be assessed.

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