

## Time-Zone Bizarre

# Fixing British Columbia's time machine | Marcel Strigberger

By **Marcel Strigberger**



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(November 11, 2019, 12:00 PM EST) -- The time has come the walrus said to speak of many things. What time you ask? Daylight saving time (DST), in British Columbia of course.

Following a public survey to which over 223,000 folks responded, input from about 15 groups and experts, 229 private e-mails and a report prepared by a R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., a research organization, the B.C. government in 2020 will no longer be making the usual biannual time switch like the rest of us, but will be maintaining DST year round.

A majority favoured not making the switch.

I have some concerns about this process.

Respondents had from June 24 till July 19, 4 p.m., PDT, to respond. I am not sure what PDT means as DST was presumably in effect in July. I am certain other would-be respondents would have been equally confused.

Justice has been distorted.

Time is too valuable and too fluid a commodity to allow the law to mess with it. Many respondents who wanted DST only cited reasons such as health and wellness, safety and environment. Interestingly many who wanted the status quo, cited reasons such as health and wellness, safety and environment. I should add for statistical importance, a contingent of respondents in both camps said, "I don't care."

The survey had open-ended questions, allowing add-ins. As far as I know, nobody suggested keeping DST only would increase the chances of the Canucks winning the Stanley Cup.

And of those 15 expert groups, 10 wanted one-time systems only, but they were split about 50/50 as to which one to keep all year round — DS or standard time; i.e., ST. (I'm still not sure what PDT is.)

Also, of importance to about 55 per cent of the DST-only people, was being in alignment with other places, such as Washington, Oregon and California. About 45 per cent said let B.C. decide on its own; we're big enough to do so.

The opinions on the subject have gone haywire all over the place. No government legislation can make it better.

I sort of admire Newfoundland. Their time zone is set off against the rest of the country by an extra 30 minutes. I'll never figure that one out, but it looks robust and creative to me. If B.C. was going to play with it, at least it could have acted more outrageously and adopted a quarter-hour system. So, when it's 5 in Toronto, it would be 1:45, DST, where the salmon are spawning. I doubt the salmon would care.

Another concern I have is whether other provinces might start going time-zone bizarre. I can see Quebec looking into this issue now. Given some of its past controversial legislation, it would not

surprise me to see the government of Quebec go one up on B.C. and introduce legislation declaring that the province is to have 24 hours of daylight. And they'd probably try to ensure compliance too, by establishing a constabulary to enforce it, something like the Quebec *Sûreté du Soleil*.

The survey, incidentally, was skewed, asking whether respondents wanted to continue the biannual switch or to maintain DST all year round. It did not include the simple third and obvious choice, like "Would you like to keep standard time?"

That's like asking you when you buy a hot dog whether you want mustard and relish or just relish. (Yech!) This lack of choice prompted many of those private 229 e-mails to protest the survey as being flawed, as they would have chosen ST.

I can see a court challenge on constitutional grounds. There is a good shot at arguing that the B.C. government messing with time violates s. 12 of the Charter in that it constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment." Riling up over 223,000 people over an issue like this certainly is at least unusual.

I also want to make a passing comment on the name Malatest. I'm sure they're a great research organization. It's just that if I'd have a say in naming a company that prepares public opinion reports, I'd more likely go with a name like "bonatest."

I started out this missive mentioning Lewis Carrol's walrus. I'll conclude with that author's Humpty Dumpty character, who might have said in this case, "Surveys mean what I choose them to mean. Neither more nor less.

The law should stay out of the nation's clocks. If they ain't broke, don't fix them.

*Marcel Strigberger retired from his Greater Toronto Area litigation practice and continues the more serious business of humorous author and speaker. Visit [www.marcelshumour.com](http://www.marcelshumour.com).*

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