

Aligning BC's Family Day with the February Holidays of Neighbouring Jurisdictions

While British Columbia has a statutory holiday (Family Day) on the 2nd Monday of February, six other provinces observe holidays on the 3rd Monday of February, which is also a federal holiday in the United States of America. For companies which conduct business in other parts of Canada or in the United States this misalignment of holidays can create a barrier to commerce and trade and can be a significant inconvenience. Alignment of BC's Family Day with the February holidays of neighbouring jurisdictions is necessary to ensure that business productivity and economic activity is not unduly adversely affected by the holiday.

BC's Family Day holiday was first proposed by Premier Christy Clark during her successful run for the leadership of the BC Liberal Party in early 2011. Later, in that year's Speech from the Throne, it was announced that BC's first Family Day holiday would actually be observed on February 18, 2013---the 3rd Monday of February. However, a two-week online consultation process was held later to determine if British Columbians preferred the holiday to fall on the 2nd or 3rd Monday in February. Following a public campaign by some in the tourism industry to promote the 2nd Monday as a way to boost their mid-February sales, the respondents to the online poll expressed a preference for the 2nd Monday which the provincial government followed.

Unfortunately, four years of this misaligned holiday have shown that it has negative impacts on the operations of businesses across the province such as wasted staff time and missed business opportunities. When offices in BC are closed for Family Day but firms are operating in all neighbouring jurisdictions, local businesses are unable to service their interprovincial or American customers and may be unable to capitalize on potential sales or other opportunities. Then, come the 3rd Monday in February, the employees of those same local businesses may largely be sitting idle, wasting staff time as they are unable to reach those same clients who are then closed due to their own holiday.

The misalignment of Family Day causes inconvenience, increased costs, and lost opportunity for businesses of all sizes and in myriad industries. From the financial services sector which still has to operate when markets in Toronto or New York are open, to the film and television industry which must stay open on Family Day to coordinate with the industry hub in California, to any company that has customers, ships product, or does business outside of BC, the misalignment of Family Day is a unnecessary inconvenience and burden.

To put the economic impact in context, interprovincial trade accounts for 44% of BC's total complement of trading partners. The value of interprovincial export of goods and services from BC is valued at more than \$37 billion.¹ Of that, 81.5% or \$30.5 billion is conducted with provinces which have February holidays that are misaligned with BC's Family Day. The value of one business day's interprovincial export between BC and the six misaligned provinces is in excess of \$120 million. This does not include the nearly \$18 billion in annual BC exports to the United States² (or over \$71 million per business day) whose manufacturers/suppliers are also inconvenienced on the 3rd Monday in February because of the President's Day holiday in the United States.

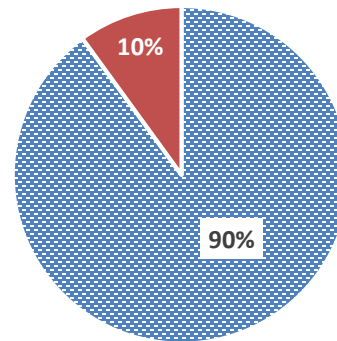
¹ *Exports of Goods and Services to Other Provinces, by Province/Territory*, BC Stats, accessed at: <http://bcstats.gov.bc.ca/StatisticsBySubject/ExportsImports/Data.aspx>

² *Trade Profile – United States*, BC Stats, accessed at: <http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca/statisticsbysubject/ExportsImports/Data/CountryTradeProfiles/TradeProfileUnitedStates.aspx>

In an effort to quantify the economic impact of BC's misaligned Family Day, the Burnaby and Surrey Boards of Trade conducted a survey of their respective memberships over a two-day period generating 413 unique responses from businesses across a variety of sectors. Of those who had a preference, 90% preferred BC's Family Day be moved to the 3rd Monday in February to align with the holidays in other jurisdictions, while only 10% expressed an interest in it remaining misaligned.

In addition, respondents were asked about the impact of the misalignment of Family Day on their operations. 50% of respondents required someone to work on Family Day to deal with customers and clients from out of province. Of those, 37% had to specially open their offices on Family Day while 43% had at least some employees putting in time from home and 54% had their owners or managers working on Family Day.

In considering BC's Family Day, which is held on the 2nd Monday in February, would you prefer it be aligned with the holidays in most other Canadian provinces and the USA, which is on the 3rd Monday in February?



■ Yes ■ No

Of those businesses having to conduct some level of operation on Family Day, 72 respondents attempted to provide estimates of the direct cost of having to operate their business on the holiday. The total estimate of the cost to just these 72 companies was \$130,130 in wages, supplies, utilities, etc. Many of the other respondents commented that the biggest cost was the sacrifice of family and personal time that employees had to make in order to work, an unfortunate price for families to pay considering the nature of this holiday.

For those businesses which closed on Family Day, several were able to identify and quantify lost business opportunities directly attributable to the misalignment of the holiday. 97 respondents commented that they were aware or suspected that their organization had lost opportunities because of BC's misaligned holiday. Of those, 12 respondents provided details of the cost of such lost opportunities. Examples of such lost opportunities included the respondent who was unable to finalize an out-of-province sale due to being closed and lost a \$10,000 purchase, or the company which missed more than 42 phone sales inquiries from outside of BC on Family Day. These 12 companies alone estimated the total value of the business lost to them due to the misaligned holiday at \$92,500.

This simple survey was meant to gain an understanding of the real impact of BC's misaligned Family Day on businesses both big and small and across all industries and sectors. Based on the amount of responses and the consistency of their complaints, it is clear that BC's misaligned Family Day is having a negative impact on the business community. If one extrapolates from these local results to all of BC, the cost of lost business, lost productivity and lost family time would be substantial.

The solution to this problem is to align BC's Family Day with the February holidays of neighbouring jurisdictions which are all observed on the 3rd Monday in February. There is little legal impediment to changing the date and such a change would be relatively simple for the provincial government to make;

the Family Day Act does not designate a specific date but instead empowers cabinet to prescribe a day in February to be observed. As the collective voice of all business in all sectors, the BC Chamber of Commerce must seek to reduce the negative impact of BC's misaligned Family Day on the broader business community.

THE CHAMBER RECOMMENDS

That the Provincial Government continue its history of reducing unnecessary burdens on business and:

1. Align BC's Family Day holiday with the February holidays of neighbouring jurisdictions by moving the date Family Day is observed to the 3rd Monday of February.

Submitted by the Burnaby Board of Trade and the Surrey Board of Trade