

February 7, 2013

What to do with another day off?

By Jason Hewlett Daily News Staff Reporter

Family Day marks the first new holiday in B.C. since 1974

How to spend an extra day off?

On Monday, parents will get the day off work and kids can stay home from school in what is the first new holiday in this province since B.C. Day was introduced in 1974.

Family Day was announced when Premier Christy Clark took office a year ago, and it brought B.C. in line with five other provinces that already enjoy a holiday between Christmas break and Easter.

The idea is to give families time together in the middle of what feels like a long stretch of late winter.

But what to do with the day?

I asked my wife that question. She'd actually forgotten that Monday is Family Day. She's a stay-at-home mom, so every day is a family day for her.

No dinner for me tonight after that last sentence, I assure you.

According to the B.C. Human Resources Management Association, a non-profit dedicated to advancing professional practices, people can expect federally regulated business like Telus, Canada Post and banks to be open.

For everyone else, Monday is a statutory holiday. Some businesses and municipal buildings will be open and some won't, said Christian Codrington, the association's senior manager of operations.

"It's essentially a day to be with family, whether you're shopping on that day or skiing," he said.

For the record, Codrington intends to spend time with his kids, but he's in the same boat we are, with no firm plans as of this writing.

City facilities will operate according to holiday hours on Monday. The Tournament Capital Centre will be open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and the Canada Games Pool will open from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

An indoor GranFondo and Family Festival takes place at the TCC on Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Alex de Chantal, the City's community wellness event/project co-ordinator, said there will be a Vancouver Science World exhibit, B.C. Royal Museum gold panning station, face painting, free swim and other activities.

The GranFondo is an MS Society Fundraiser, and fully supported indoor ride on stationary bikes. Registration is \$50 for adults, \$25 for kids, with participants asked to ride for an open amount of time under the leadership of Olympic cyclist Catharine Pendrel.

"It's basically a cycling event with people riding on their stationary bikes and taking pledges," said de Chantal.

He promises a fun day for the whole family, which is the point of Family Day. As for his plans? He intends to collapse after a busy Sunday and spend time with his family.

"A holiday in the middle of February sounds good to me," said de Chantal.

If so inclined, de Chantal and other B.C. residents can head to Sun Peaks Resort and enjoy a full day of skiing at half the price.

Those who want to learn to ski can visit Harper Mountain and get lessons for half-price on Monday. Single-day lessons range from \$30 for children aged 6 to 14 or \$55 for adults.

Operator Lisa Daburger said most resorts are offering discount passes. She wants to encourage people to learn to ski.

"Everyone is really excited. I've been getting lots of phone calls," said Daburger.

She said Family Day is shaping up to be as busy, if not busier, than a typical weekend. Her staff will enjoy a day off on Tuesday, but Daburger doesn't get one until the off-season, she said. Such is the plight of owning a business. Caffè Arianna owner Rosario Perilli plans to close his Third Avenue coffee shop on Monday and give his employees the day off. He said everyone will appreciate a break.

Dave Retzer contacted me on Twitter saying he will spend Family Day enjoying "a good ski" at Stake Lake. Oh yeah, if you're looking to take the bus somewhere, keep in mind the City's bus schedule will operate like a Sunday, not a Monday.

Not everyone is taking the day off. Kamloops resident Emile Scheffle, who now lives in Ontario, will be working. But he told me via Twitter he wishes he were back in B.C. for Family Day.

Kamloops-North Thompson MLA Terry Lake is going to use the day to get caught up on reading and email, and take a couple of hours to spend with family.

"It's a hectic world," said Lake. "A lot of people use days like this to catch up and, for me, it's a bit of a catch-up day."

The Kamloops-Thompson School District won't be in service, with schools and offices closed. Superintendent Terry Sullivan will use the time to get ahead because his family has grown up and moved on.

But he wants his staff and students to enjoy the extra day off.

"Hopefully it will be used for the purposes in which it was intended," said Sullivan.

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The business of having a day off

Family Day is a new holiday for everyone, so what are the rules that come with it?

For one, it's a provincial holiday - not a federal one - so not everybody gets the day off. Any business or service that falls under federal jurisdiction will likely be working.

That means transport services like Air Canada, CP Rail and Canada Post will report for duty on Monday, said Christian Codrington, senior manager of operations for the B.C. Human Resource Management Association.

Those who work for telecommunication companies like Telus, which are federally regulated, can also expect to work, said Codrington. Banks fall under federal jurisdiction.

There are things employers need to know if they want to be open for business on Monday. Codrington said employees who are asked to work, and who qualify for statutory pay, must be paid overtime and given a day off in lieu or an average day's pay.

To qualify for statutory pay, an employee must be employed for 30 days and work the 15 days before the holiday, said Codrington.

If the stat falls on an employee's day off, and he or she is entitled to the holiday, they must be paid an average day's pay for the time, he said.

Bob Mitchell, president of CUPW Kamloops Local 758, which represents Canada Post employees in Kamloops, said Family Day was created after many federal unions were legislated back to work. That means the holiday isn't included in their collective agreements.

"Unfortunately, for the next five years, we won't get a Family Day," said Mitchell, adding residents can expect to receive mail on Monday.

Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo MP Cathy McLeod understands every government office will be open, hers included. And she will be on duty in the House of Commons.

"It's a normal Monday in Ottawa," she said.

Some holidays are unique to every province, and Family Day is celebrated on different dates elsewhere in Canada.

McLeod understands why people in B.C. might think the holiday applies to everyone, she said.

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WORD ON THE STREET

Robb Gilbert: It's nice to have the day off (from the Kamloops Museum and Art Gallery) but I like my job. I plan to read. Probably at that point I will read Proust in French.

Aiden Fontaine: If it's going to be nice, I've got some new kayaks, so I'm going to go down to the river, take a dip down there, and maybe get a little wet.

Steve Mitton: I plan to not work (at Ric's Grill). It's nice to have the extra day off in February. I might take the kids and go to Vernon to see some relatives.

Kathryn Proudfoot: We're going to go to Manning Park (Resort near Hope) and go cross-country skiing. It's awesome to have this break. February is a long month after all this winter.

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