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Family Day on the Treadmill

Albertans have among the lowest leisure time and longest work hours in the world

EDMONTON – A new fact sheet released on the eve of the Family Day weekend by the U of A’s Parkland Institute highlights that Albertans are spending less time with their families than anyone else in the country and most countries in the OECD.

The fact sheet, entitled Family Day on the Treadmill, says that an average Albertan has 182 hours less of social leisure time than the Canadian average. The Institute also points out that, in 2010, Albertans worked 7.5 weeks more than the average worker in the top 15 developed (OECD) countries. Albertans also have fewer vacation and paid holidays per year than most countries in Europe and many in the OECD.

The higher number of work hours is exacerbated by the fact that only 17% of children aged 0-5 in Alberta have access to a regulated childcare space, placing us in the bottom three in Canada.

The combination of high working hours, low vacation entitlement, and lack of childcare space is not a recipe for a healthy and productive workforce.

“Working this hard comes at a cost,” says Parkland’s Research Director Diana Gibson. “It means less time for family and community, higher levels of stress, and poorer health.”

The fact sheet references studies which point out that longer work hours tend to reduce time needed to “nurture family relationships and parent effectively; provide non-financial support to extended family members; and engage in voluntary activities.”

It is not surprising, therefore, that Albertans also rank among the lowest in the nation for sense of belonging to their communities.

“A statutory holiday named after families is not enough,” asserts Gibson. “We’re hoping that Albertans, and their government, will take pause this Family Day and reflect on policies needed to properly support Alberta’s families and communities in the long term.”

The Parkland Institute is a non-partisan public policy research institute in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Alberta. The fact sheet “Family Day on the Treadmill” is available for download on its website at <http://parklandinstitute.ca>. The data used in the fact sheet is drawn from a new report on inequality in Alberta to be released by Parkland in March 2012.

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For more information, or to arrange an interview:

Diana Gibson, Research Director: 780-492-8558 or diana.gibson@ualberta.ca