



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	September 22, 2021
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Hamilton@Work - Future Work Models (HUR21007) - (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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## INFORMATION

The global pandemic has forced many organizations to make drastic changes in the manner in which they conduct business and run their operations. Throughout the last several months, the City has been navigating these ever-changing challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing the many obstacles while ensuring the optimal health, safety and wellness of our community and employees. Under the guidance of the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), priority has been given to ensuring the seamless delivery of critical and essential services to our City's residents, and balancing these needs with the health, safety and wellness of our employees. To date, we have been able to successfully ensure the delivery of these City services while minimizing any risks to the employees.

While many front-line employees have continued to work on-site throughout the pandemic, the vast majority of the administrative staff have worked from home. Accommodating this situation has required the effective management of a number of transitional issues, including numerous Human Resources (HR) related issues that have impacted all City employees in a number of employment related areas. As we address the recovery phase of the pandemic, we must continue to adjust and amend our city policies and procedures, ensuring that they adequately meet our needs.

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OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

In order to align our operations with our new reality while continuing to minimize the risk to employees and leverage opportunities that we've recognized with more flexible workplace models, it is imperative that we all work together, adapt to new ways of working, and create tailored responses to our workplace challenges. As such, we have been turning our minds and efforts to the future of our work, and how and where employees can work best in the future.

As we emerge from the pandemic stronger and more resilient than ever before, we will carry forward the lessons learned and use them to enhance employee flexibility in ways we had not previously considered. Our employees have embraced new and more efficient ways to continue delivering services from home. Technology has been effectively leveraged to ensure seamless accessibility to information, resources and documentation. And as an employer, we have, and will continue to provide working models that support employee health, safety and wellness.

As evidenced by attendance data for those areas within the organization that have been working from home since March 2020, both absence hours and occurrences have decreased by approximately 30% as compared to pre - COVID-19, for all work groups where at least one employee was working from home. Based on this data, and feedback received from both Leaders and employees alike, employees are better equipped to manage incidental illness by taking care of themselves at home, reducing the likelihood of exposure to their co- workers, and still be productive and effective in delivering their essential work functions while taking care of their health and wellness.

Additionally, a recent environmental scan of relevant articles and comparable employers, suggests that a more modern, flexible work model is the right direction.

A study issued by Stats Canada in April 2021, titled "Working from home: Productivity and preferences" reports that "of all new teleworkers, 90% reported being at least as productive, i.e., accomplishing at least as much work per hour, at home as they were previously at their usual place of work". Even more relevant, "the percentage of new teleworkers who reported doing more work per hour was relatively high in public administration (41%)".

A report published in June 2021 by the Business Development Bank of Canada entitled "What's Next for Remote Work" reports that "Nearly three-quarters of business owners plan to offer employees the opportunity to work remotely after the pandemic". And 54% of employees surveyed by the BDC, say "that access to remote work will be a determining factor when applying or accepting a job, and 27% of small and medium-sized business employers (say) that remote work gives them access to a bigger talent pool".

During an AMO session (Association of Municipalities Ontario) earlier this year, City of Brantford leadership presented a comprehensive plan that operationalized their revised Overall Accommodations and Yard Facility Plan including the new City Hall, and a work from home model resulting in approximately 33% reduced office space and \$21.5 million in capital savings.

And a white paper developed in June 2021 on behalf of the Regional Single Tier Human Resources Group (having consulted and surveyed a number of Ontario municipalities) concluded that “remote work in some form and quantity is here to stay. Several environmental, financial and societal factors support this direction while the next generation of talent is likely to demand it. “

As we shift our focus from working from home as an emergency response, to telecommuting (working from home) as a preferred work model, there is a growing need for guidance on how to support this transition and ensure sustainability across the organization. Appendix “A” to Report HUR21007, entitled “Hamilton@Work”, maps out a series of Guiding Principles that will help anchor the modernization of our existing telecommuting program. These principles are rooted in the City’s vision, mission, strategic priorities and cultural values. They will assist leaders to review the job functions that report into them using a common framework in order to determine the ability for continued post-pandemic flexible workplace arrangements, in their units. This work has been guided by the following overarching principles:

### **Culture**

A positive workplace culture improves teamwork, raises the morale, increases productivity and efficiency, and enhances attraction and retention of the workforce. Therefore, we will continue to embrace, leverage and grow our shared culture values of collective ownership, steadfast integrity, sensational ownership, courageous change and engaged empowered employs as individuals and an organization to shape how and where we get work done, and how think about our work in order to produce high quality results.

### **Business Continuity/Operational Service Excellence**

We strive to continue to provide services to citizens at the highest level. It is essential to assess any workplace model relative to the ability to maintain business continuity and service excellence. A successful assessment will take into account new technologies and processes that support an efficient and modern mobile and/or remote workforce while maintaining the same or higher levels of service.

## **Clean and Green**

The City of Hamilton aims to be an environmentally sustainable workplace where we take a leadership role in operating in a sustainable manner. Therefore, we are environmentally conscious and make decisions on how we operate that are focused on reducing waste and our carbon footprint. We leverage technology in order to automate and modernize work processes and practices that advance the programs and services delivered to our communities.

## **Talent/People**

Our People are key to the City's success. The modern workplace has evolved and changed. In a competitive job market, providing a flexible workplace models will set the City apart and support attraction and retention of talented, dedicated employees looking for work-life balance and flexibility. Within the global category of Our People, we must take into account health, safety and psychological well-being of staff working on or off-site. Leaders must be clear in their expectations on conduct, service levels, performance and deliverables regardless of physical work location, enabling the success of all parties.

## **Financial Considerations**

We ensure corporate strategies are in place to support the cost efficient and financially effective delivery of city services. Decision making and workplace governance is based on how best we can continue to meet the needs of our community. Therefore, implementing changes to shift our workplace model will be planned, thoughtful and gradual. Change will be funded by existing budgets or where it makes sense, we will request to increases to allotted budgets slowly working towards fully implementing our desired workplace model over time.

## **Modernization**

We are a dynamic, improvement focused organization that has continuously adapted and evolved. As we transition to our new work environment, we must continue to embrace this growth-focused approach and address/review processes, technology, service delivery and existing framework from a modernization perspective and plan for the future of our work.

## **Change Management**

We implement new working models to help sustain our future workplace, while ensuring a healthy, safe and productive workforce. We will provide necessary flexibility to accommodate differences and recognize that work is evolutionary and dynamic. We are committed to helping staff transition through these significant changes and challenges while planning for the future of our work and workplace. To ensure our success we will have frequent, open and transparent communications with staff and ensure meaningful feedback mechanisms are put in place so that we can adapt and enhance our work practices along the way.

## **Future Work Models**

It is important to note that arrangements for our future workplace is evolutionary and fluid, and that it will be necessary to continue to build and modify our future work models. This includes continued review and refinements to other Corporate Strategies, including Information Technology and Facilities/Accommodation Master Plan. Having said that, there are foundational visionary pieces (Guiding Principles) that will serve as anchors to help guide us in our work going forward. These foundational pieces will help support the workplace transition and continuity strategies, as we operationalize these future work models.

In order to consider a flexible workplace arrangement, an employee must first and foremost have the ability to perform the core duties and responsibilities of their role from a remote location. Assessment to determine which workplace model works best will be the responsibility of the People Leader, using the same Decision Criteria for each job/position. Operational needs and priorities are key considerations in order to ensure seamless delivery of services to stakeholders.

## **Other Key Considerations:**

- Performance – Continued commitment to the principles of our Performance Accountability and Performance (PAD) program, including establishing clear expectations, setting work goals and providing consistent performance feedback should not be compromised by providing a flexible workplace model. People Leaders must continue to manage performance and address any objective deficiencies. Ending a flexible workplace arrangement may not be the right solution to managing performance issues and approving a flexible work arrangement does not absolve a People Leader from managing, or an employee from meeting, performance expectations.
- Health, Safety and Wellness – all flexible workplace arrangements must maintain and provide the best model to support the health, safety and wellness of employees.

- Technology and Equipment – the IT Strategy includes long term plans and direction related to mobility, enabling our people and IT optimization. These plans will continue to move forward, taking into consideration the City’s Future Work models, and align with our Guiding Principles.
- Working Models – Our Future Work Models will mean each employee will fall into one of the following four work arrangements: Office Employees, Home Employees, Hybrid Employees and Mobile & Frontline Employees.
- Flexibility – the Decision Criteria provides consistent criteria to determine which working model works best for each Job/Position, however flexibility and discretion can be objectively applied in circumstances where different working models may be appropriate in different situations (for example; accommodation based on human rights obligations, flexibility during inclement weather).

### **Tools and Resources to Support People Leaders**

- Policy and Procedures – updated Flexible Workplace Policy and Procedure (replacing current Telecommuting Policy)
- Information Technology Resources – links to IT information to support employees working in different workplace models, including asset requests, instructions for software usage to support remote/mobile work.
- Facilities Resources – links to Facilities related information to make informed decisions on floor plans, office allocation, and future plans to amend the Facilities Accommodation Master Plan to best allocate floor space.
- Financial Resources – links to Corporate Finance policies and procedures to provide direction to common questions related to Parking, Expense Reimbursement.
- Employee Support – support for People Leaders and Employees on how to address various topics related to flexible workplace arrangements, including how to engage remote teams and best practice related to virtual meetings.
- Guiding Principles and Decision Criteria- Guiding Principles and Decision Criteria that serve as our “anchors” to ensure consistent assessment of Jobs/Positions when determining the workplace model, in addition to how we will progress and continue to modernize flexible workplace models in the future.

### **Mental Health and Wellbeing of Employees**

While we continue to monitor the state of mental health and wellbeing of the organization, it is important to recognize the need to adjust our programs, services and supports for employees as they continue to manage through a number of challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. For the most part, the pandemic has created changes in our work practices that, in some cases, has required changes in work practices for many employees, resulting in uncertainty and stress. Regular communication and engagement

with staff is crucial in order to ensure clarity around role expectations, clearly defined performance measures, appropriate workloads and access to mental health and well being supports.

The Future Work Models will incorporate a number of factors that allow opportunity to ensue a balanced approach so that the mental health and well being of our employees can achieve optimal levels. Employees at different levels within the organization, and with different sources of stress and anxieties, will be provided with the tools and supports to stay resilient, manage stress and support their families through these challenging circumstances. These resources will also evolve and change over time, so that the employees continue to receive optimal mental health related supports, in order to ensure psychologically healthy and safe workplaces.

### **Working Remotely from Outside Province of Ontario**

Part of the consideration for remote working is the issue of working within the Province, Country and even internationally. While working remotely within the Province of Ontario is generally an acceptable practice with little adverse implications, working from outside of Canada or even internationally, proves to be more problematic.

Generally speaking, working within the Province of Ontario does not result in any administrative or legal issues respecting the employment arrangements between an employer and employee. Having said that, working outside Province or Country, will result in greater challenges and barriers such as taxation implications, the applicability of employment-related legislation (such as the *Employment Standards Act 2000*, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, and the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*), immigration provisions, and time zone challenges. This is primarily due to the fact that most employment related laws and regulations are Provincially mandated. By working outside the Province or Country, an employer and employee will face many legal, administrative and financial barriers that can become extremely problematic if not managed effectively.

Given the circumstances, including the current regulations mandating travel both inside and outside of Canada, working remotely will be restricted to locations only with the Province of Ontario for all City employees. There may be some extenuating circumstances that may necessitate alternate considerations, however these situations will be considered on a case by cases basis, with careful review and assessment of the various issues and potential barriers of such arrangements.

### **APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix “A” to Report HUR21007 – Hamilton@Work