

Clause embodied in Report No. 4 of the Administration Committee, as adopted by the Council of the City of Toronto at its meeting held on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002.

45

Flexible Work Arrangements

(City Council on April 16, 17 and 18, 2002, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Administration Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations of the Personnel Sub-Committee embodied in the following communication (February 26, 2002) from the City Clerk:

Recommendation:

The Personnel Sub-Committee recommends to the Administration Committee the adoption of the report (January 16, 2002) from the Commissioner of Corporate Services, entitled “Flexible Work Arrangements”; and reports, for the information of the Administration Committee, having requested the Commissioner of Corporate Services to submit a follow up report to the Personnel Sub-Committee in April, 2003, using the format of the foregoing report.

Background:

The Personnel Sub-Committee at its meeting held on February 26, 2002, had before it the following report and communication:

- (1) (January 16, 2002) from the Commissioner of Corporate Services, advising that this report has no direct financial implications; and recommending that the harmonization of flexible work arrangements be approved; that all forms of flexible work arrangements be considered and where appropriate be implemented, after being assessed in the context of operational requirements and legal and collective agreement implications; and
- (2) (February 15, 2002) from the Executive Director, COTAPSAI, advising that COTAPSAI is pleased to provide its support for the foregoing report on flexible work arrangements.

(Report dated January 16, 2002, addressed to the Personnel Sub-Committee from the Commissioner of Corporate Services entitled, “Flexible Work Arrangements”)

Purpose:

This report recommends the adoption of flexible work arrangements for the City of Toronto.

Financial Implications:

This report has no direct financial implications.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the harmonization of flexible work arrangements be approved. That all forms of flexible work arrangements be considered and where appropriate be implemented, after being assessed in the context of operational requirements and legal and collective agreement implications.

Background:

Flexible work arrangements have been discussed in a variety of contexts in the City of Toronto. These contexts are:

Harmonization of Human Resource Policies:

All the former municipalities had policies and informal practices that covered flexible work arrangements, to varying degrees. Collective bargaining has consolidated over 50 collective agreements and some of these arrangements are incorporated into current agreements.

The Board of Health’s Report of the Task Force on Health and Work:

In February 1999, City Council supported the report in principle and requested a full review and report on “how the city can implement key recommendations, in particular Recommendation No. (17) and to ensure that these recommendations be considered in human resource policies ...”

Recommendation 17 of this report includes the following wording:

“that the new City of Toronto model leadership in enlightened government and healthy work by considering all new city policies in light of their impact on the health of workers living in the city or employed by the city”

“by supporting innovative approaches to work that improve productivity and enhance employment opportunities, including flex-time, phased-in retirement and all forms of leave, as well as investigating the feasibility of a four day work week.”

Master Accommodation Plan:

In December 1999, City Council approved the “Accommodation Plan and Long Term Strategy for Service Delivery for the City of Toronto and Master Plan for Office Accommodation”. The implications of telework (working from home) as an alternate method of service delivery for the City of Toronto are being studied as part of this plan.

Concerns about traffic congestion and the environment:

The Toronto Transit Commission has asked the city about its flextime arrangements because of the strain on public transit during peak hours in the downtown core. Traffic congestion and environmental issues are also a concern as more people travel further to work. There were more smog alerts and advisories during summer 2001 than in any previous year.

Comments:

Alternative work arrangements are different ways of working from the standard. They include:

Flexible Work Hours:

Employees work a standard length day or week, but with flexible starting and ending times. They are expected to be present during core hours (typically 10 a.m.- 3 p.m.). In some organizations employees must start and end at the same time every day; in others they can vary their times, as long as they are present during core hours. Flextime is quite widespread in Canada and is by far the most common alternative work schedule arrangement.

Compressed Work Week:

An arrangement whereby employees work longer shifts in exchange for a reduction in the number of working days in their work cycle (i.e., on a weekly or biweekly basis). This can be beneficial for employees in terms of additional days off work (e.g., longer weekends) and reduced commuting time, whereas employers can extend their daily operating hours, with less need to resort to overtime. Compressed workweek provisions are not necessarily designed as a means of balancing work and family responsibilities. In some cases, an employer may initiate them solely in order to improve operational efficiency e.g., in fire suppression.

Part-Time Work:

An arrangement, whereby an employee works a regular schedule that is less than the standard thirty-five(35) or forty(40)-hour week. These hours remain the same from week to week. This can mean working shorter workdays five days a week or working fewer than five days a week or some combination. Part-time work may be a permanent or temporary arrangement. A subset of part-time work is Job Sharing where two employees share the same job. Each employee works an agreed portion of the job and shares responsibilities for the total workload. Job sharing may be a permanent arrangement or may be time-limited, with provisions for extensions. Scheduling characteristics of job sharing may include overlapping time, split shifts, alternate workdays or working in different locations at the same time.

Telework or Telecommuting:

An arrangement that involves the employee doing some or all of the job from a location other than an employer's worksites. The work is usually done from the employee's home, returning to the central office for meetings and other group activities. Employees are connected to the office by computer and telecommunications technology. "It's moving work to the workers, instead of workers to the work. Telework is expected to be a significant method of service delivery in workplaces of the future.

Benefits for the Organization:

Extending Hours of Service:

Flexible working hours and compressed workweeks allow the organization to extend hours of service outside the typical 8.30 to 4.30 day. If all employees are required to work the same hours, any extension of service requires compensation for overtime. A flexible schedule and compressed workweeks would permit longer coverage, may better match operational need, and limit the need for overtime.

Reducing Absenteeism:

When employees have flexibility in hours either through flextime or compressed workweeks they are able to schedule some medical/dental appointments outside work hours.

Increase in productivity:

Employees who have access to flexible work arrangements are more likely to feel valued by their employer and this can translate into commitment, productivity and loyalty to the organization. Several studies show an increase in 10-20 percent productivity for employees who telework one to three days a week. Increased productivity results from fewer interruptions and less commuting time. There is also no loss of productivity when employees can't travel to work because of snowstorms or other impediments to travel.

Reducing space requirements:

Working at home or telework saves money by eliminating, consolidating and allowing for the sharing of office space thus supporting the city's direction towards the reduction of office space requirements including the demand for parking.

Retaining and hiring valuable employees:

If an employer wants to retain valuable employees and be seen as the employer of choice when recruiting new employees, it must consider employee needs and morale. Employees have family and community responsibilities outside working hours. They need flexibility in order to balance work and other demands made upon them. The availability of flexible work arrangements is one of the major criteria that individuals consider when deciding whether or not to stay with an employer. Similarly individuals seeking new employment are more likely to choose employers

who provide flexibility in the workplace. Flexibility also gives the organization the ability to recruit from a broader talent pool. Flexible work arrangements, particularly telework would facilitate hiring people who may otherwise be unable or unwilling to work for the city e.g., individuals who do not live near the city worksites, people with disabilities.

Minimizing or avoiding downsizing:

Part-time work or job sharing has been used by employers as a way of minimizing or avoiding layoffs. These arrangements could be used as a way of achieving savings. Organizations that are downsizing risk losing skills, expertise, and knowledge when employees leave.

Benefits for the employee:

Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities:

Flexible work arrangements allow employees to balance work and family responsibilities. Many employees have children to care for as well as full time jobs. A major component of the workforce is now facing the need to care for elderly relatives. In some cases employees are caring for both children and parents – the so called “sandwich generation”. Managing dual responsibilities at home and work can lead to problems such as absenteeism, tardiness, stress, low morale and productivity.

Accommodating Personal Needs and Reducing Stress:

Flexibility in the workplace benefits all employees. It accommodates personal commitments related to home, community or personal lifestyle, without taking time off work. It allows employees to attend university or college classes or pursue other educational pursuits. Compressed workweeks, part-time work and telework usually result in less time spent commuting and more time for other pursuits. When employees have a degree of control in organizing the various aspects of their lives they often feel less stressed.

Benefits for the community:

Flexible working hours reduce traffic congestion, demand on public transit during core hours, and pollution.

Implementation:

Human Resources will develop guidelines for managers and employees, to implement part-time work, job sharing, flexible work hours and the compressed workweek.

Human Resources staff in consultation with Facilities Services and Information Technology will develop a telework plan, taking into account the goal of retaining staff and the objectives of the Master Accommodation Plan.

Conclusions:

There are good business reasons for implementing flexible work arrangements. The most important benefit of flexible work arrangements is that they facilitate improved service delivery to the citizens of Toronto. They also reduce traffic congestion and demand on public transit during peak hours.

Employees want access to flexible work arrangements. Employees have shown that they are interested in having access to flexible work arrangements. All of these arrangements were previously implemented in the former municipalities, some through formal policies and others informally or as pilot projects.

Current and future challenges require a flexible approach to how we work and deliver service. We need to develop a workforce that is flexible enough to respond to the rapidly changing needs of our citizens and employees. We need to help employees accomplish their work in creative, supportive and flexible ways that will translate into greater employee commitment, superior service and client satisfaction. We need to become an employer of choice in a competitive market.

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(Communication dated February 15, 2002, addressed to the
Personnel Sub-Committee from the
Executive Director, COTAPSAI)

COTAPSAI is pleased to advise the Personnel Sub-Committee that we have reviewed, and discussed with City staff, the report on Flexible Work Arrangements.

The report is timely, appropriate, and one which COTAPSAI can endorse and support.

With concerns within the City about staff morale and the Master Accommodation Plan, flexible work arrangements can be seen as positive.

Once again, COTAPSAI is pleased to provide its support for this report.