

WORKPOINT

Rethinking How and Where We Work
in the BC Public Service



Introduction

Since 2006, the BC Public Service has been transforming its approach as an employer in response to the reality of changing labour force demographics, changing citizen needs and expectations and changing technology. Our progress and process have been set out each year in Being the Best, the Corporate Human Resource Plan for the BC Public Service. In 2010, the companion Gov 2.0 Strategy, Citizens @ the Centre, built on this with a vision for modernizing and improving government operations and the delivery of services to the public in response to the same prevailing forces.

This strategy, *WorkPoint*, now draws on those two plans with a focus on how and where we work in the public service. Specifically, it sets out initial steps for how the BC Public Service can adapt to and benefit from changes in technology and organizational culture to promote greater flexibility and mobility in public service work styles. Doing so will result in a more engaging and competitive employment experience, improved environmental stewardship and improved financial performance. Seen in that context, this approach is essential to advancing the true “triple bottom-line” sustainability of service delivery to the public in B.C.

The idea of mobility and flexibility in the workplace is addressed in both Being the Best and Citizens @ the Centre, with specific commitments related to promoting a supportive corporate culture and providing appropriate technology solutions. *WorkPoint* explores in more detail how these commitments and others will be applied to pilot a new approach to working that reflects the potential of current technology, employee expectations and employer attitudes. But it also acknowledges that to achieve the greatest benefits, mobility and flexibility must be pursued as part of a broader vision for how government manages its real estate inventory.

The ideas outlined here are more than just a view to how we use space. They represent a massive shift in how we work individually and together in the years ahead. In many ways, this shift to new ways of working is complex and potentially difficult. It challenges traditional management approaches and entrenched attitudes about the workplace and our work environment. It requires a willingness to try something new and the courage to trust that changing how we work can yield real benefits. But, as with all the steps taken since 2006, it offers up the potential to make us better as a public service dedicated to meeting

the needs of the more than four million British Columbians we all serve.





*"Another benefit of this open-space concept
is that you're really able to be responsive to
what kind of space works for you."*

Carolyn Henson, Ministry of Education

The Changing Nature of Work

For a growing number of people, work is now defined less by where we are and more by what we do. Technological innovation, changing employment cultures and business needs are all colliding to redefine where, when and how work happens.

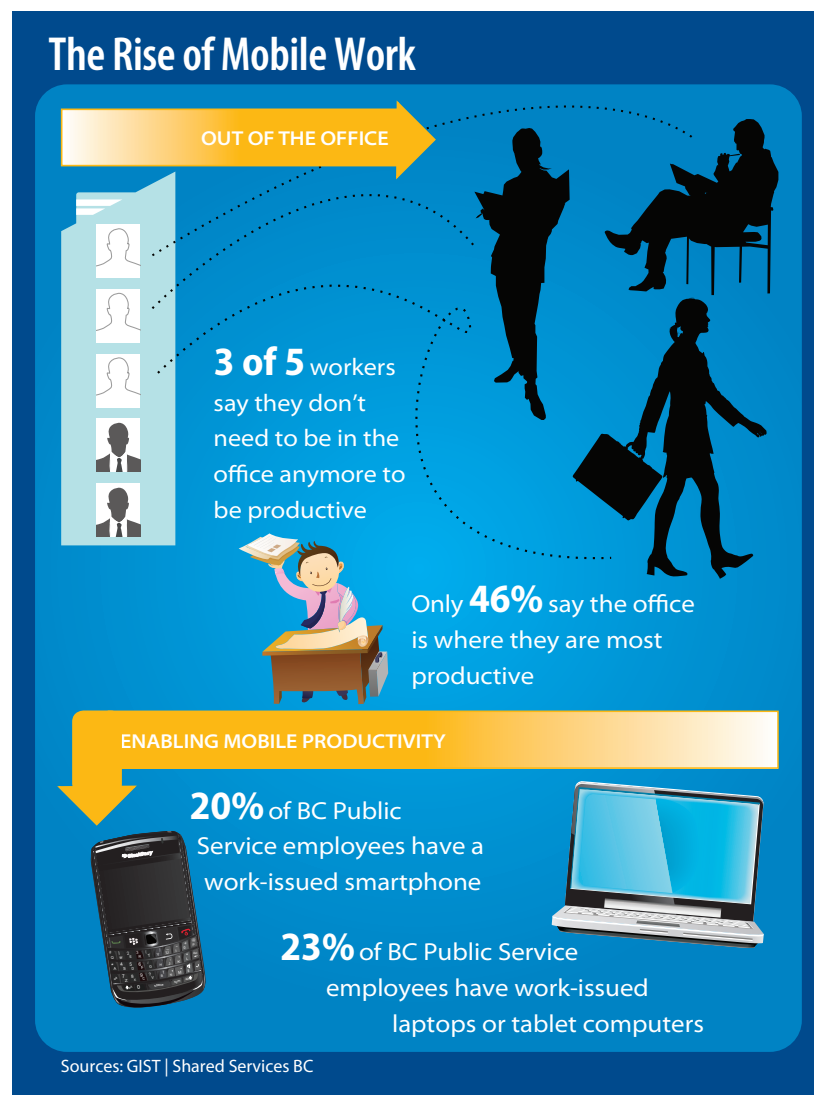
Technology

Work used to be a place you went because the equipment and resources needed to do your job were there. For many workers, that will always be true because our work requires us to serve a particular purpose in a particular place at a particular time. But for many others, the rapid rise of mobile technologies is rendering the concept of work as a place less relevant. Even the once innovative idea of working from home as the only real alternative to working at an office is now becoming outdated. In the wired world, technology connected locations. In the wireless world it connects people regardless of location. For employees whose primary resource and output is knowledge, the “office” is no longer a defined space and dedicated desk but instead a set of tools as portable as their skills and ideas.

Untethered from a physical office, work is instead defined by connections, both technological and human. As a result, for a growing cadre of mobile

workers the work environment is no longer a designated place but rather a network of work points – temporary locations from which they interact virtually or in person with colleagues or clients in whatever way is most effective. These work points may be within a traditional office facility, in our homes, in public spaces or halfway around the world, limited only by preference, appropriateness and connectivity. The mobile worker is no longer limited to a choice between office and home but instead has a continuum of options.

But technology is not just separating work from space. It is also separating work from time. Armed with smartphones and tablets and laptops, we are always connected whether for personal or professional purposes. The idea of “going online” is rapidly becoming as dated as “going to work” because we are always online. The accessibility provided by mobile technology



like smartphones and social networks can further blur the already fading line between our professional and personal lives. This comes with its risks as we learn to manage expectations of availability and the temptation to work more.

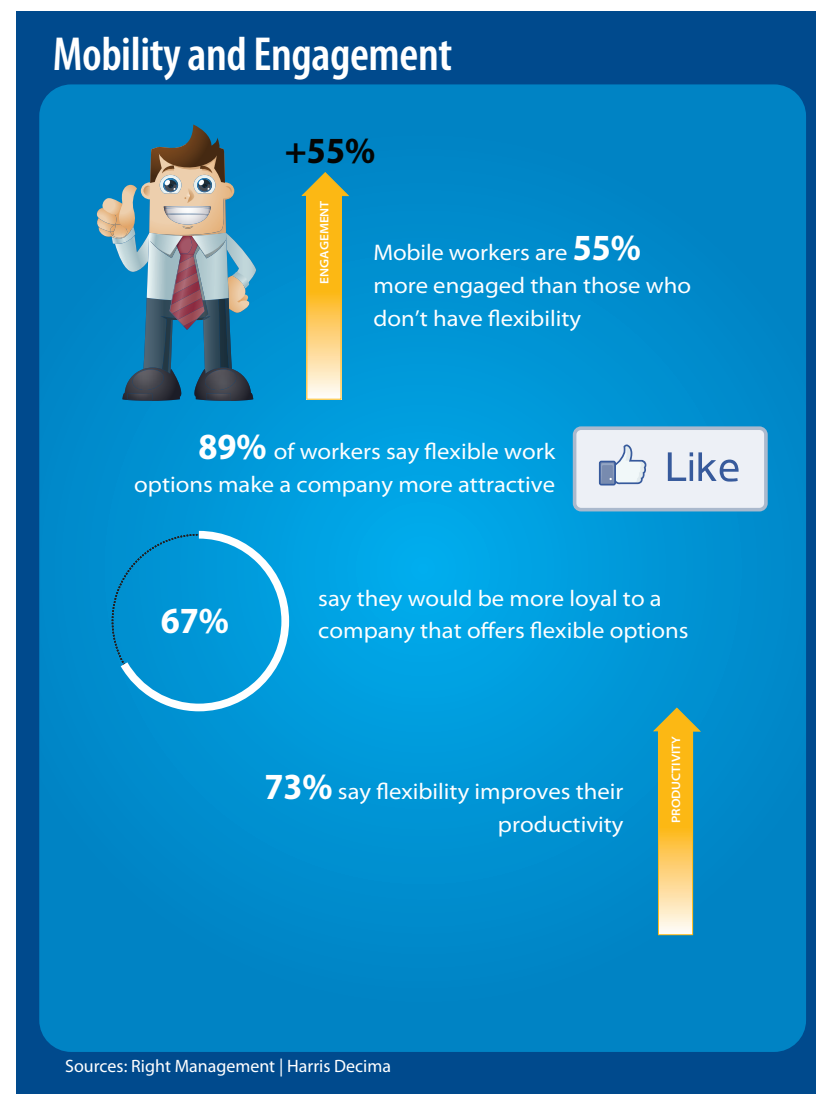
Moreover, we are increasingly technology literate. Where once the technology we had at work far surpassed that available to us at home, today many of us have more current and flexible personal devices than are found in their work environment. Where their employer has failed to keep technology current, employees in many organizations are now bringing their own devices if they feel that allows them to do their jobs more effectively. The end result is that many employees are embracing mobility even if their employers are not keeping pace. That is as true in the public service as anywhere else.

Culture

Complementing the technological shifts is an equally significant trend in organizational culture. Recognizing that enabling more mobile work styles enhances employee engagement and that engagement improves business outcomes, employers are seeking to encourage mobility. This can be a challenge in established corporate cultures where more traditional “I can’t manage my staff if I can’t see them” management practices prevail and employees see dedicated workspace as an entitlement or a symbol of their status in the organization.

At its core, mobility and flexibility demand a culture of trust – one in which employees are explicitly trusted to conduct themselves professionally with the freedom to work in ways that allow them to be as effective as possible. For many organizations, particularly in government, this is a major departure from the established culture of risk aversion. Concerns inevitably arise around issues like performance management and information security. But the business imperatives are too significant to ignore.

Research shows that workers, including supervisors, entrusted with flexibility are more engaged, more productive and often more collaborative in their work – all of which yield improved results. Conversely, disengaged workers are more likely to leave their jobs, have higher rates of absenteeism, are less productive and more stressed – all of which come with real costs to their employers. Moreover, flexibility and mobility are now viewed by prospective employees as competitive advantages that separate top employers from the rest. As we embrace new technologies and the flexibility



they provide in our personal lives, many of us also desire access to the same tools in our work because we see their potential to help us do our jobs better. Despite common perception, this attitude is not limited to younger workers. But it will become an even more powerful business driver as younger workers come to dominate the workforce.

But while mobility and flexibility may be seen by employees as “perks” or benefits, smart employers are approaching these concepts as valuable business assets that do much more than help attract talent. A mobile workforce by its very nature requires less physical work space, which translates into lower business costs and can help meet other goals such as reduced environmental impacts.

The environmental benefits of mobile working are increasingly relevant for many organizations where offering a “green” employer culture is a competitive advantage. Many employees are drawn to an employer that works to reduce its carbon footprint, as well as the potential to reduce their own footprint by not having to commute to an office on a daily basis.

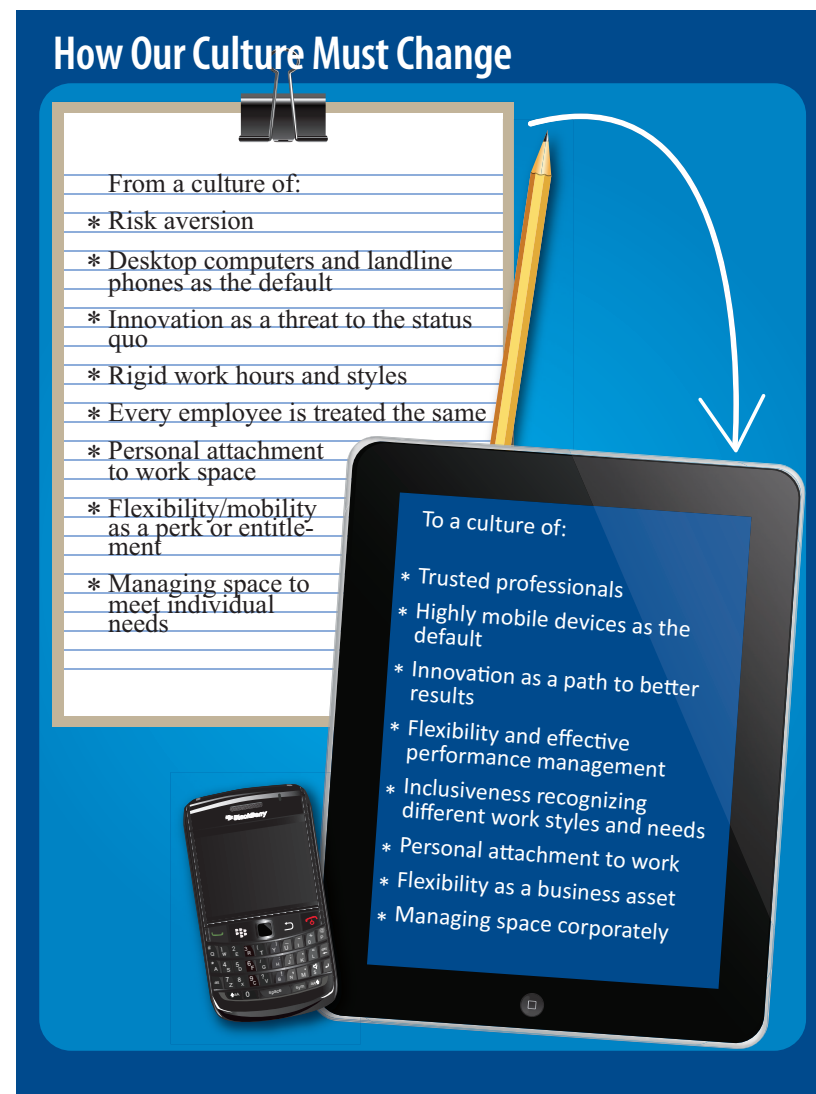
Mobility and flexibility don’t suit many types of work. But where they can be applied, culture is often either the greatest driving force or the greatest obstacle. A more mobile and flexible culture requires more than just supportive technology and human resource practices, as essential as those are. It requires a different

corporate attitude to work on the part of employees, where the often traditional attachment to our work space instead shifts to focus on our work itself.

Space

Taken together, these related cultural and technological transformations create the potential to completely rethink how organizations manage their physical work environments. Despite the trends, it remains true that many jobs are still best suited to a traditional dedicated workspace. Moreover, as important a consideration as it is, individual employee preferences and needs alone can’t determine flexibility and mobility. The nature of the work and the needs of clients or broader work units may make mobility and flexibility less viable options. But where they are options, they can be enhanced by changes to the physical work space that also offer the added benefit of ongoing lower costs or cost avoidance to the employer.

Even in many traditional office settings, a significant portion of desks sit empty at any given time as we work elsewhere, attend



meetings or serve clients. Greater mobility and flexibility doesn't mean simply taking people out of this office setting on a permanent or part-time basis, leaving space empty even more often. Instead it creates an opportunity to optimize the use of that office space to meet functional, financial and human resource objectives. For example, some dedicated desks and work spaces may remain for non-mobile employees, but others can be replaced with "non-territorial" work points that are used as needed by mobile employees. Shared team and meeting spaces become more valuable, reflecting the change in work styles and acknowledging that face-to-face collaboration can be highly productive.

This approach generally allows for greater density, with more employees based in a smaller overall space because many of them are not there on a regular basis. This, in turn, allows employers to re-evaluate their overall real estate footprint with an eye to either reducing their space or allocating it more efficiently. Where mobile work styles have been embraced, many public and private sector organizations have achieved significant reductions in space and associated costs – in some cases, as much as a 50 per cent reduction. As they reassess their space needs, organizations can also identify opportunities to relocate to places that better meet their clients' needs, achieving additional business benefits.

All of these factors – technological change, evolving workplace cultures and the impact of both on work space – are increasingly redefining

how and where we work. Our work environment is moving away from the models that have been in place for the better part of the last century. The traditional concept of telecommuting is being replaced by an entire continuum of mobile options. Enabled by a trusting work culture, it is a no longer just a choice between working in the office or working from home. It is now a choice of working from virtually anywhere.



The BC Public Service Context

Within this context, the BC Public Service has defined a profound cultural and operational shift that will enable greater mobility and flexibility among its almost 30,000 employees because it will help address four corporate priorities that align with a balanced triple bottom line approach:

1. Improving employee engagement and our competitiveness as an employer to address future recruitment and retention pressures.
2. Managing an increasingly tight fiscal reality in ways that reduce operational costs so resources can be focused on service delivery to citizens.
3. Delivering services in ways that better meet citizens' evolving expectations.
4. Reducing the environmental impact of government operations to further the commitment to be a carbon neutral employer.

The 2010/11 Corporate Human Resource Plan, Being the Best, explicitly committed to a culture based in the recognition that the BC Public Service is "a workforce of trusted professionals that embraces open communication, a

collaborative work environment, and flexibility and choice in work styles and tools." Within the same plan was the commitment to support all requests for mobile working where an employee is meeting performance expectations and there is no clear impediment to operational requirements. Being the Best also reinforces a commitment to supporting inclusiveness in the public service, which includes recognizing the diversity of employee work styles, preferences and requirements.

Similarly, the province's Government 2.0 Strategy, Citizens @ the Centre, committed to:

- » Encourage better use of the technology tools available to change how the public service works on a day-to-day basis.
- » Update policies and supports to more fully enable mobile workers.
- » Make the workplace more flexible, both in terms of the physical environment and in terms of workplace policies.

As the wording of these commitments suggests, we are not so much introducing something new as finding ways to do it better. Many of the elements needed to support mobility and



flexibility already exist. Collective agreements and current policies clearly support mobility and flexibility, and have for some time. So embracing a new approach to work is less a shift in policy and more a shift in practice and culture.

Traditionally, the risk-averse operational culture of government has limited flexibility, managing to minimize the potential for errors at the expense of the benefits flexibility can bring. The process for gaining approval has often been complex and employees frequently cite supervisor resistance as a major obstacle with a perception that the default response to requests has always been “no.” The commitment made in Being the Best, is specifically intended to shift that default to “yes” wherever possible.

Many supervisors are willing to support their employees in adopting new work styles and need support to confidently lead their teams and manage workload in a more mobile environment – one where employees and supervisors themselves can be mobile. As we pursue a more comprehensive approach to mobility and flexibility, supervisors will also be encouraged and empowered to approach mobility and flexibility as a business driver for their area of responsibility, rather than something to be managed on a case-by-case basis.

It is also true that many of us as employees are resistant to adopting a more flexible work style and work environment even if it might be well-suited to our work. As in many organizations, for

many employees a dedicated space is a symbol of status and relevance. A particular type of work space has come to be viewed as an entitlement, with what amount to corporate myths about rules that define this entitlement. In reality, those perceived rules aren’t written in stone but rather provide guidelines based on function rather than entitlement. With the option to be more mobile, many of us might hesitate out of concern for what it might mean for our perceived performance and our career opportunities. If we are out of sight of leaders, will we also be out of mind and miss out on opportunities as they arise?

Ultimately, the challenge for all of us is to balance any reluctance with the potential opportunities presented by a more mobile and flexible work style. It is not an addition to our current approach but a new approach to work overall – one that improves business outcomes. But mobile individuals and teams will succeed based on the same factors that have always determined success. In fact, by adopting new work styles and new approaches the physical work environment can actually strengthen teams by fostering a focus on collaboration, communication and individual accountability.

Where the nature of work makes mobility an option, this does not mean it will be an entitlement any more than a traditional office has ever been an entitlement. The goal is to offer a greater range of work styles, tools and space options that meet the needs of individual

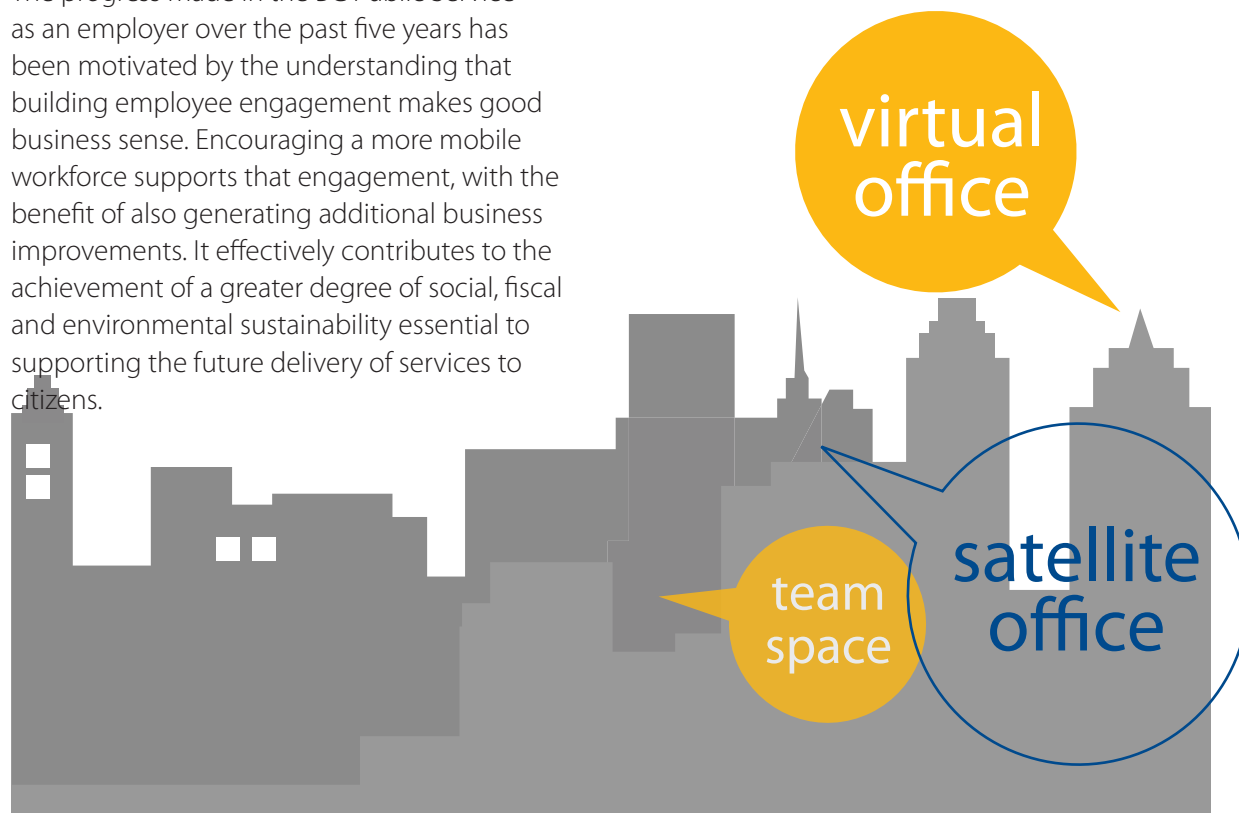
employees and their work unit's operational requirements. Over time, mobility is expected to become the norm – neither perk nor entitlement nor privilege but rather just a part of how the public service works. And it will become a part of everyone's work environment. Even those who work in a traditional assigned space will increasingly interact with mobile colleagues through video conference and other means during their daily work. More than just a technological or space change, it is a fundamental change to the experience of working in the public service.

This shift is ultimately a response to the same factors that have driven the Corporate Human Resource Plan since 2006. As the population ages and retirement rates rise in the years ahead, analysis shows that the BC Public Service will be unable to fill all the vacancies that arise because of increasingly competitive labour market conditions. This means we will inevitably have fewer employees, which means we will need less space. At the same time, work is underway to improve services to citizens across the province by better coordinating and, where beneficial to government and citizens, consolidating front-line service delivery.

As a result, there is a need to plan for how to consolidate the real estate footprint where it makes sense. Promoting mobility and flexibility will allow for greater consolidation, which in turn reduces costs and allows money to be reallocated to other priorities. It also reduces

government's carbon footprint, further advancing the progress made in recent years toward greater environmental sustainability. The goal is not only to use less space, but to also make better use of that space in ways that improve productivity, engagement and client satisfaction. This will, in turn, also ensure the BC Public Service continues to develop as a highly competitive employer that is able to recruit and retain the talent needed to deliver quality services to citizens.

The progress made in the BC Public Service as an employer over the past five years has been motivated by the understanding that building employee engagement makes good business sense. Encouraging a more mobile workforce supports that engagement, with the benefit of also generating additional business improvements. It effectively contributes to the achievement of a greater degree of social, fiscal and environmental sustainability essential to supporting the future delivery of services to citizens.





"Because I had new flexibility at work, I didn't get caught in the same work/time traps that I used to. I was able to 'vote with my feet' moving around if I felt I wasn't getting the work done due to my seating situation. I became more productive, and despite having the tools to work at home, my work/life balance improved. My 'work focus' changed slightly – away from the workspace and more to the work."

John Hamann, Citizens' Services

Photo: 4000 Seymour, Victoria

Where It Starts: The Leading Workplace Strategies Pilot

Building on the specific commitments made in Being the Best and Citizens @ the Centre, beginning in the fall of 2011 the BC Public Service began piloting Leading Workplace Strategies (LWS), a coordinated corporate initiative designed to promote mobile working and ultimately help ensure more efficient use of government real estate.

Drawing on the experience of other organizations that have implemented similar mobility strategies, LWS is beginning with a series of pilot projects across several ministries to demonstrate the benefits and establish an effective support and provisioning process. This pilot period will also allow an opportunity to:

- » Develop and test a suite of training materials, guidelines and other resources designed to help supervisors and mobile workers establish successful mobile working experiences.
- » Ensure technology provisioning aligns with planning for a number of other related initiatives, including telepresence services, “bring your own device” smartphone and computer concepts, and the planned U3 corporate computer refresh project.

- » Have ministries identify their opportunities to support mobility/flexibility as part of the current Transformation and Technology planning cycle.

A mobile and flexible work approach won’t be successful if it is adopted blindly and without thoughtful preparation and consideration of its impact on individual work styles and team dynamics. Under the LWS approach, employee work styles, requirements and preferences can be assessed to determine which of three categories of worker is most appropriate for the individual:

1. Resident: an employee who is at their desk at least 60 per cent of their day working on a computer, and requires a designated space with specialized IT infrastructure or access to physical shared resources to achieve work objectives.

Different Types of Workers

WORKSTYLE CATEGORIES:

WORKSTYLE CHARACTERISTICS:	RESIDENT	INTERNALLY MOBILE	EXTERNALLY MOBILE
AT THEIR DESK AT LEAST 60% OF THEIR DAY	■		
AT THEIR DESK LESS THAN 60% OF THEIR DAY		■	
REQUIRES DESIGNATED SPACE TO BE EFFECTIVE	■		
REQUIRES TECHNOLOGY TO BE EFFECTIVE		■	
SPENDS MOST OF THEIR DAY ON THE COMPUTER	■		
SPENDS MOST OF THEIR DAY OUT OF THE OFFICE WITH CLIENTS/ COLLEAGUES		■	
REQUIRES SOME SPACE TO MAINTAIN OFFICE IDENTITY		■	
DOES NOT REQUIRE A DEDICATED WORK SPACE			■
SPENDS SHORT PERIODS OF TIME IN THE OFFICE			■
WORKS FROM HOME OR EXTERNAL LOCATIONS			■
USES MOBILE DEVICES AS MAIN POINT OF CONTACT			■

2. Internally Mobile: an employee who is at their desk less than 60 per cent of the work day, does not have a dedicated workspace but does require access to a physical space in the office to interact with direct reports or clients.
3. Externally Mobile: an employee whose work does not require a dedicated work space, spends short amounts of time in the office in favour of working from home or other external locations, and uses mobile devices as their main point of contact. This may include more traditional scenarios in which the employee works primarily from their home.

The work styles and preferences of the employees within a work group can then be evaluated to determine the best configuration of their work space. Where there are a high number of resident workers, the work space may remain quite traditional. But where there are a large number of mobile or work-from-home candidates, the space can be reconfigured to provide “non-territorial” work spaces for use on an ad hoc basis by those employees. The mix of space will be tailored to the work style mix within the work group including choice in collaboration and quiet spaces to support different task needs through a work day. Related technology provisioning would also align with each employee's preferred work style. In keeping with the commitment in Being the Best, the opportunity to adopt a mobile work style will

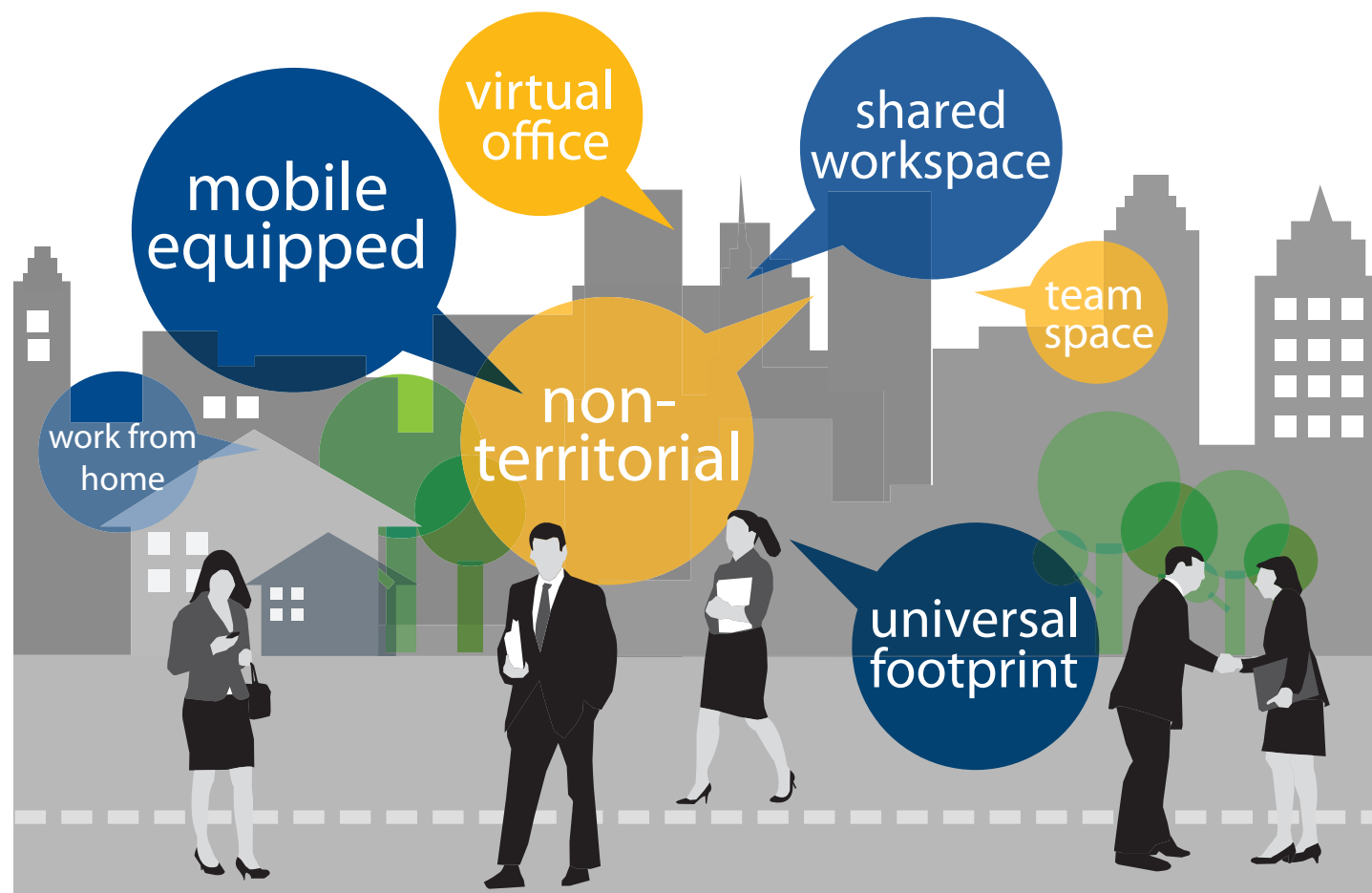
be subject to satisfactory performance and the ability to support the work group's operational needs.

The initial pilots of LWS are focused on Victoria because it has the largest concentration of public service employees and so presents the greatest opportunity to prove the benefits of the approach. There are approximately 11,000 employees working in Victoria. Actuarial projections done in support of the Corporate Human Resource Plan suggest that population will decrease to approximately 9,500 by 2020 due largely to retirements. This presents a need to manage reduced space demands and a corresponding opportunity to consolidate space. Moreover, as government seeks to fill those pending vacancies, the availability of mobile and flexible work options will make the public service a more competitive employer in its core.

Victoria also has a high concentration of headquarters and “back office” staff whose work requirements are potentially better suited to flexible options than frontline service delivery roles which often require a more customized accommodation strategy. That doesn't mean frontline staff can't benefit from mobility and flexibility as well, but rather that we will focus initially where there is greatest potential for improvement in the short-term. The diversity of experience and requirements for frontline staff will require more time and planning to define the best approach, but doing so will be part of the longer-term objective.

However, as the LWS pilots proceed, a strategy is also being developed to improve the regional and community-based real estate footprint. This process of determining the optimal breadth and depth of government's service footprint will be a collaborative effort involving local/regional representatives of the ministries/organizations providing person-to-person services and will be led by the Ministry of Labour,

Citizens' Services and Open Government. It will consider opportunities to integrate service delivery, rationalize facility investments, provide consistent and convenient citizen access, promote future flexibility and support excellence in professional service delivery. As with LWS and overall approach to real estate management, this will be approached from a corporate as opposed to a ministry-by-ministry model.



Where It Will Lead: A More Sustainable Public Service

The LWS pilots will focus on how we will deploy and support a more mobile and sustainable approach to working. The concept of mobility and flexibility in how we work will eventually become the norm. It is not a question of if we should do LWS but how we do it most effectively. It is essential that we get the how right because our ability to support a mobile workforce is not an end unto itself. Instead it is a critical component of a broader transformation being planned for how government manages its real estate portfolio across the province.

Our real estate strategy will:

- » Improve the employee experience, creating flexible and mobile work choices that suit business needs and personal work styles and strengths so that employees work where they are the most productive and engaged.
- » Reduce real estate costs through more efficient use of government assets and more intense use of space.
- » Support effective service delivery by matching the location and design of our work space with the purpose it serves and the results citizens need.

- » Minimize environmental impacts by reducing commuting, traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions.

LWS will support employees in working where they are the most efficient. The approach recognizes that, in addition to the productivity gains resulting from mobile and flexible work options, benefits to employees will include greater engagement, less commuting and savings in time, household expenses and stress.

With flexible work options among the top non-financial benefits Canadians seek, LWS will play an important role in attracting and retaining employees. The experience of BC Public Service employees in piloting mobile work tools like iPhones and iPads across government has demonstrated that there are clear benefits to productivity and engagement when flexible work is supported technologically and culturally.

Core government owns a total of 9.6 million square feet of property in 660 buildings in 102 communities across the province, including facilities such as corrections centres and courts. But approximately 29 per cent of that owned portfolio is office space. In addition, the province leases another 7.4 million square feet of space, 89 per cent of which is office space. The average



lease period is five years and annual lease costs total \$132 million.

This means that in total the public service occupies 9.3 million square feet of office space alone, the majority of which is leased. And that means the consolidation and reduction of office space offers the greatest short-term opportunity to reduce costs by reducing the amount of leased property.

To realize that benefit, we will need to be highly strategic in how we manage our allocation and use of space in the years ahead. Management of a large real estate portfolio is a highly complex endeavour involving much more than just maintenance and the day-to-day challenge of “keeping the lights on.” It must also take into account financial and operational requirements, current and forecast demands, environmental management and much more.

But underlying all this there are also less tangible considerations. Government’s physical presence in a community often represents the “face” or local embodiment of government, meaning in some ways its value is as symbolic as it is real. And its greatest role is as a platform for the delivery of services to citizens. That multi-faceted value of real estate is precisely why it is so important for the portfolio to be guided by a thoughtful, principled and comprehensive strategy.

The real estate strategy under development,

along with the assessment of regional and community service delivery, will help shape the strategic management of leases to meet corporate goals. As leases expire, decisions on whether to renew them will be based on the corporate need. The move to a more mobile workforce should result in consolidation of space over time and an overall reduction in leased space.

It will also look at the relationship between purpose and location with the view that where a government office is located should be determined, when possible, by the purpose it serves. Where the primary function is frontline service delivery then those offices should be located where it makes most sense for clients. But where the primary function is “back office” work, it makes more sense for the location to be guided by employee needs – for example, easy access to public transportation to encourage green commuting options, more effective access to work-related information and flexibility in work schedules.

The LWS model will influence this longer-term planning. It will see spaces reconfigured



to support more productive work styles and consolidate employees in new locations. This will be supported by the broader implementation of supporting infrastructure, such as wireless networks, and improved availability and choice of mobile devices.

LWS is part of a much bigger picture. It supports not only our vision for the BC Public Service as an employer, but the broader transformation of the public service culturally and operationally. For many of us, changing how and where we work will be the most tangible manifestation of that transformation. Even for those whose work is not suited to more mobility and flexibility, it will help shape government's broader approach to managing its physical footprint in communities across the province. The result will be an improved employment experience for the public service and better service delivery for the citizens of B.C.

Faced with changing demographics, evolving technologies that enable entirely new approaches to work, and an employee population that increasingly wants to work differently, it is clear that government does not need more office space. What it needs is space that is used more effectively to support the changing culture of work and meet the needs and expectations of a modern workforce and citizenry.

What We Will Do First

This strategy marks the first step in a new approach to how we work and how we manage our work space. Initial actions over the next year include:

- » Conduct a series of Leading Workplace Strategies pilots in Victoria to establish effective deployment and support processes for a broader corporate implementation in future years.
- » Support the pilots with an online tool that provides assessment of employee work styles and analytics to identify the potential for mobile work styles within work groups and organizations.
- » Develop improved resources and supports for supervisors and employees to ensure the successful adoption of more mobile and flexible work styles where appropriate.
- » Align work space and work tool provisioning to better support mobility and flexibility.
- » Continue developing a long-term corporate real estate strategy to provide clear direction for managing government's real estate portfolio.
- » Update relevant human resource, space and technology policies and guidelines to ensure they consistently support modern work styles, including revising the existing Government Office Space Standards.
- » Continue to manage the real-estate portfolio to leverage LWS opportunities to achieve greater efficiencies, realize cost savings and reduce the carbon footprint.