

## THE FUTURE OF WORK IS NOW

*By Robyn Bews*

It's time for some myth busting. Did you know that 42 per cent of Canadians would shift jobs if they could telework? Did you also know that telework can increase productivity up to 40 per cent?

This past April, Calgary celebrated Telework Week, a week dedicated to raising awareness of the benefits of telework for employees, employers and the environment. In early 2010, City Council made the unanimous decision to recognize April 19-23, 2010 as Telework Week in Calgary. The week included a series of events hosted by Calgary Economic Development's WORKshift initiative.

During Telework Week, Tim Lorman, from the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association, College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF), one of the largest financial services companies in the United States, took part in our WORKshift and Corporate Social Responsibility webinar, and identified that, "It's not about change management; it's about acceptance management." In plain language, it means telework is here – either get on board or get left behind.

Lorman is right; there isn't any more room or time to question the practice of telework. It's real, it's happening in organizations every day, and the tangible, triple bottom line benefits are being reaped. We have to be honest that telework may not be possible for some people due to the nature of their work (think nurses!), but for the large majority of the business community, this is a concept that can and should be embraced. The abundance of tools, resources and information available to Calgarians through WORKshift right now makes implementing a telework program a reality.

Also during Telework Week, many Calgarians were fortunate to attend a keynote address from Scott McNealy. McNealy is the visionary founder and former CEO of Sun Microsystems. During his time with Sun, McNealy implemented one of the world's largest telework programs and saw an increase in productivity and employee morale, while seeing a decrease in turnover and infrastructure/facility costs.

McNealy believes in the value of telework programs to the point that during his address he noted that, "Any company that doesn't have a telework program in place is at a competitive disadvantage." Strong words, and a challenge for many in attendance.

Still don't believe the value of telework? Consider this: At the launch of Telework Week, the inaugural telework charter was signed. Led by deputy mayor, Alderman Diane Colley-Urquhart, this was an opportunity for the Calgary business community to see the champions of telework in this city – to understand that real leaders from actual companies are embracing it and promoting it, regardless of sector. The telework charter was signed by representatives from TELUS, The City of Calgary, ATB Financial, SAIT Polytechnic, Calgary Police Service and ENMAX. These are large, complex organizations that have implemented robust telework programs, are seeing the benefits, and want to encourage other organizations to do the same. And they are competing for the same talent as your organization.

The truth is that telework is not just for the small businesses with open-concept offices and a staff of fewer than 50 people – although it works just fine there too! Major organizations with significant talent and infrastructure cores are discovering that they are wasting money providing their employees with cubicles and offices that are used less than 10 per cent of the week – don't believe me? Try walking around your floor and see how many people are at their desks.

It's time to embrace the ongoing evolution of work to further establish Calgary as the best place to live, work and play in the nation. The future of work is now – where are you?

To find out more about WORKshift and to find tools and resources to implement a telework program in your organization, visit [www.workshiftcalgary.com](http://www.workshiftcalgary.com).