

The human-centered company culture being forged has some recurring characteristics: flexibility, asynchrony, trust, belonging, and a holistic focus on well-being. – Global Talent Trends, 2022

Policy Brief Date: April 1, 2022

Pilot Start Date: Monday June 6, 2022

New Dawn Reduced Working Hours Pilot

In recognition of the need for all of us to be able to attain a better balance between our work, home, family, and personal lives (life is busy and getting busier for all of us), and in recognition of the value of flexibility and autonomy for human well-being, on June 6, 2022, we'll launch a 6-month Reduced Working Hours Pilot.

The aim of this pilot is to try out a Reduced Hour Work Week for all full-time salaried employees with the hope of making this a permanent feature of New Dawn in 2023.

This policy brief contains information on why we're undertaking this now, the principles that structure our thinking on the effort, and how we see this unfolding.

As a pilot, we know we've not captured everything here. If you see possible gaps in the pilot structure, or have questions or concerns, please share those with us. We'll be learning about and adjusting the model together over these six months, and recognize that while this model offers many benefits, it is also not without its challenges. New Dawn will be among the first in Cape Breton, and the first in the non-profit sector nationally to move in this direction and we hope that what we learn in the process might help others considering this direction.

A Global Shift to Reduced Working Hours

All across the world, COVID-19 has prompted organizations, businesses, and governments to re-evaluate where, when, and how they work. Reduced Hour Work Weeks (or as more commonly referred to, Four-Day Work Weeks) have been implemented in Iceland, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates, Scotland, Japan, Belgium, and Ireland. Closer to home, companies like Alida, Coconut Software, Tulip.io Inc, and the Leadership Agency have transitioned to a Reduced Hour Work Week, as have the municipalities of Zorra, Ontario and Guysborough Nova Scotia.

Starting in 2015, Reykjavik City Council and the Icelandic government launched the initiative spurred by pressure from trade unions and civil society organizations. Their goals were to reimagine citizens' relationship with work and to determine if compressing office hours would actually enhance productivity. In this example, "workers managed to gather their existing working practices and working conditions and made changes to try and make them more efficient and productive...simple things like cutting out meetings, moving to emails."

The overarching picture that emerges is that the Icelandic trials strongly challenge the idea that a reduction in working hours will lower service provision. On the contrary, they show that productivity can, in many instances, be increased through working time reduction.

When employees are satisfied with their companies' time (how many hours you are required to work each week) and location (where you can work from) they are 2.6 times more likely to report being happy and 2.1 times more likely to recommend working for the company.

Making this transition now, not only stands to improve work-life balance for all of us now and into the future but gives us a competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining new hires. "Whoever cracks the four-day work week is

going to win the talent war because that's going to be the new in-demand perk," says Marta Riggins, Employer Brand and Employee Engagement Strategic Consultant.

In a 2022 study by Global Talent Trends, 63% of professionals indicated that work-life balance was a top priority, compared to 60% citing compensation and benefits as a top priority.

What is the goal of the pilot?

- To take proactive steps to prevent workplace burnout
- To better balance the work and home lives of employees
- To reframe how we think of work: from hours in office to responsibilities to execute/outcomes to achieve.
- To exemplify the values of flexibility, self-determination, and accountability
- To empower staff to take responsibility for the outcomes they
- To be mindful of pressures to constantly be productive.

Who is eligible?

All full-time salaried staff.

New Dawn's Reduced Working Hour Principles

Flexibility: this model may fit each division and person differently, though at the same time, each division and the overall organization requires stability and predictability to serve those we exist to serve. This transition aims to empower everyone to think about and test out a work-week structure that fits best for their lives and their professional responsibilities.

As long as the choices you are making are (1) clearly communicated and agreed upon by your manager/team, (2) reflective of how you want to be working (not how you feel you have to be working), and (3) allow you to complete in a given week what needs to be completed for your team and division to function well, this model is meant to be flexible.

Personal discipline/self-determination: (a) empowering staff to take their own mental health and wellbeing seriously and to adjust their days and weeks to reflect the hours they put in outside of M-F 9:00-5:00pm and (b) empowering staff to take responsibility for the work that has to be done in a given day, week or month, rather than policing/enforcing a stringent set of working hours.

Accountability to, and respect for, self, colleagues, community, management, New Dawn: committing to this trial with openness and a spirit of wanting to make this work equally well for everyone, including the community we serve. This trial will need to involve ongoing conversations among teams, and between employees and their managers, about how it is working, how the work is being shared/executed, and any adjustments that may need to be made along the way.

Our Changing Relationship to Productivity: as an organization made up of people committed to the betterment of the place they love and call home, we risk burnout if we're not able to step back from our work deeply and regularly so that we can give ourselves fully to the other areas of our life and have time to recharge. While we predict that in making this change, on the whole we'll maintain or improve productivity (as has been the case in other jurisdictions where Reduced Hour Work Weeks have been tried), this change also invites us to think about our relationship to work and productivity and how much we take on in a given day, week, and month.

What do you mean by pilot?

This is a big change. And we know there will be kinks to work out. We want to try a six month pilot, from June 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, and to undertake this pilot with curiosity and openness.

Over these six months we will be actively monitoring and seeking feedback from staff and managers. We will develop a set of questions and tools (i.e., surveys, meetings, diaries/logs) that will seek to gather what we're learning and what is surprising about this model (good and bad) and things that (a) have to be addressed and (b) could be improved, to better position us to sustain something like this long-term.

We work in different sectors and our different work requires different things of each of us. Some of our offices have to be open/available from 9:00-5:00pm Monday to Friday, others can offer/work evening hours in lieu of regular day time hours, and still others don't have a public-facing office that they have to keep open. This six month pilot allows us to look at how a reduced hour week works across different sectors: homecare, residential care, café and catering, arts centre, housing, administration and finance, immigration, and engagement.

Given that this is a pilot, be sure to contact Shane if you have any job postings in the next six months, so that he can help with the proper terminology for the posting.

How many hours am I supposed to work now?

Prior to the pilot we all worked 35 hours per week (7 hours per day), with an hour for lunch (unpaid) and two unpaid 15 minute breaks throughout the day, we were typically in the office for at least 8 hours per day, or 40 hours per week.

Our goal is to work towards better work-life balance for all of our full-time salaried staff members.

This pilot allows you, but does not force you, to work a minimum of 32 hours per week. You are absolutely welcome to keep the same work hours and patterns you currently have if they work for you.

For some people this will look like being at work for 8 hours per day (including a paid lunch) from Tuesday to Friday, for others it may be working from Monday to Thursday (being at work for 8 hours per day including an hour paid lunch). For others, it might look like working five days a week, but only from 8:00-2:30 each day including a paid lunch. Some will elect to continue to work from 9:00 to 5:00 or 7:00 to 3:00 or 8:00 to 4:00 Monday to Friday.

Some will use this as permission to take every second or third Friday off, as they feel a desire to, or to stay home on Monday once a month.

This pilot will not result in reduced compensation for anyone taking part. If the pilot becomes a permanent feature of New Dawn in 2023, it will not result in reduced compensation for anyone taking part.

As outlined above, the pilot is guided by our principles of flexibility, self-determination, and accountability to ourselves, each other, New Dawn, and the community.

Our aim of achieving greater flexibility and self-determination also means that, in conversation with your Manager and if your responsibilities allow, you may want to consider doing some of your work from home, or at least keeping in mind the option of working from home as needed, if that is a space that allows you greater focus and productivity.

What about overtime?

Our overtime threshold stays the same. For any hours you work in any week beyond your 35 hours, you will have your Manager log these in Bamboo so that you can take them as time off at a later date.

What about holidays?

New Dawn observes thirteen (13) public holidays and other days for which staff will be paid. They are: New Year's Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day, National Day of Truth and Reconciliation, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day.

The Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code notes that "If the employee qualifies for the holiday and the holiday falls on the employee's regular day off, the employer must give the employee a different day off with pay. The employer can give the day off with pay on the working day immediately following the holiday, the working day immediately following the employee's vacation, or another day agreed upon by the employee"

This means, for example, that a Tuesday-Friday employee will take a Monday holiday on the Tuesday after the holiday (or another day agreed with the employer) and a Monday-Thursday employee will simply take the holiday on the Monday.

What about hourly staff?

We are going to try this first pilot with full-time salaried staff. In the future, once we've concluded this pilot and determined whether we want to make it permanent, or look at alternate arrangements, we'll look at how a reduced hour work week can be applied to part-time and/or hourly staff. This is something we may or may not be able to make work.

Why isn't this offered to everyone at New Dawn?

In addition to the hourly staff references above, this pilot isn't currently available to staff at the New Dawn Guest Home, whose work and working conditions and terms are determined by a periodically negotiated collective agreement, and our front line Homecare staff. In time, we would like to explore whether and how this might be possible. If/as you see articles or research on alternative/reduced hour work weeks for front line and/or hourly staff, please feel free to share those with Erika and Shane.

Tips for Transitioning to a Reduced Hour Week

Work from home days: If your set-up at home allows it, consider taking work-from-home days to get through work that requires more focus and less interruptions. Sometimes these days can allow you to knock off tasks that would typically stretch out over a week, between phone calls and knocks on the door.

Shorter meeting durations: instead of 30- and 60-minute default meeting times, can some meetings be completed in 20 minutes or 40 minutes? Granted, now that we can meet in person again, we're all also definitely appreciating the small talk and connecting that zoom made challenging for so long.

MS Teams chat: a place where team members can drop notes when they think of them (i.e. when awoken at 3:00am) but others can check the chat as it is convenient for them (i.e. when their workday starts). Unlike an e-mail or a text, team members won't get a notification that someone has just added something to the Team chat, so it won't pull them away from their sleep, family, weekend, or other tasks they're working on.

Keep an eye out for other cloud-based technologies that allow teams work asynchronously (at different times of the day and week) and collaboratively and that don't require everyone to be in the same room (at a meeting) to get the work done.

Block time off in your day, week or month when you don't want to be disturbed: this could be for answering e-mails, writing, policy-development, or thinking more deeply about the work we're trying to accomplish together. Maybe its every Monday, at the start of your week. Or maybe every Thursday morning, before you head into your 3-day weekend.

Think about where you're then best able to execute this work -> at home, in another location in the building, in your office with a "do not disturb" sign posted?

Time-Off Point Person: If you are not in the office, who is best to handle urgent issues that come up? Identify your time-off partner and talk through with them the kinds of emergencies you should be contacted for (rare, urgent, life or building-threatening), the kinds of issues they should attend to on the spot, and the kinds of issues that aren't actually urgent and can wait for your return.

E-mail and Voicemail Notes on Message-Return Time: consider adding a note to your e-mails and voicemails that let's those calling or e-mailing know that you only return calls and e-mails on certain days or that you receive a high volume of calls and e-mails and will do your best to return them within a certain number (3, 5, 7) of days, and where (e-mail and phone number) emergencies can be directed (if applicable).

Rethinking Productivity: while we all have responsibilities that we need to execute and, in some cases, these are very time-sensitive (for example, an issue arises with a Homecare client, or there is a sizeable leak in an apartment roof), but often times the pressure to produce/be productive is one we put on ourselves. Spend some time thinking about what tasks have to get done, and which can wait until tomorrow, next week, or next month.

Reduced Work Hour Week: Next Steps

(1) Meet with your Manager to discuss the needs of your division, your individual responsibilities, your preferred work week structure and a model that, as best as possible, meets all of these needs, while ensuring that everyone in your division is able to do the same.

(2) Pay attention to changes you notice – good, bad, surprising – as we make the transition so that we can capture these changes and observations in our analysis of the pilot.

(3) Direct any questions, concerns, or suggestions you have to your Manager, Shane, or Erika.

More Resources

Will a Four-Day Work Week Come to Canada: <https://breachmedia.ca/will-a-four-day-work-week-come-to-canada/>

CBC The Current: Belgium's new 4-day work week: <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-63/clip/15896047>

Alida, Toronto company, moves to 4-day work week: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/business/article-alida-a-toronto-software-company-with-500-employees-to-introduce-a/>

Four Day Work Week an Overwhelming Success in Iceland: <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-57724779>