

The Honourable Anita Anand, P.C., M.P.
President of the Treasury Board of Canada
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By email: president-presidente@tbs-sct.gc.ca; monique.lugli@tbs-sct.gc.ca

Re: Impacts of increased office presence on women in the public sector

Dear Minister,

I am writing you today again about the government's unilateral decision to update the Direction on prescribed presence in the workplace, requiring an additional day of office presence for workers in the core public administration. Specifically, I would like to point out the impacts on women, mothers and families resulting from the government's May 1 announcement. On behalf of CAPE members, we are again calling on you to release a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) review of the decision.

As this government has committed itself both to evidence-based decision-making, and to the use of the GBA+ tool to review government policies and budgets, it is incumbent on the government to produce and publicly share a GBA+ analysis on the Direction on prescribed presence in the workplace. In signing the letter of agreement on telework, CAPE engaged with the government in good faith on behalf of its bargaining units. In return, CAPE expects the employer to, in the same good faith, share relevant information and analysis with its workers.

More than 60 per cent of CAPE's membership is made up of women. In our engagement with members, they have highlighted how remote work has made their lives easier and allowed them to improve their productivity and engagement at work without sacrificing the work-life balance that they and all public sector workers expect. They describe this change in work modalities as transformative; telework helps them conserve time and energy which benefits their performance and productivity at work, enabling them to compete for promotions and advancement on more equal footing with their male counterparts. A GBA+ analysis would highlight the positive effects of telework on women's morale, and an analysis of longer-term outcomes is also needed in order to document positive effects of increased flexibility.

Gendered health impacts also bear consideration in a GBA+ analysis of telework. Women experiencing gendered health problems including painful menstruations and menopause symptoms have highlighted how flexible work options allow them to reduce their use of sick days and keep on top of their workloads even when experiencing unpleasant and painful symptoms by allowing them to work from a more comfortable location and take breaks as needed to cope with

pain and other unpleasant symptoms. Chronic and episodic health issues are not cured by telework, but their impacts on a woman's career can be minimized, allowing her to have equal opportunity for career progress and excellence. A GBA+ analysis would highlight the positive effects of telework in these cases, for both the employee and the employer.

Any analysis of gender and work cannot overlook women's roles as caregivers. Whether they are looking after aging parents, children or other family members, telework is well suited to women who frequently contend with the challenges of the "double burden," or all the responsibilities of paid work in addition to unpaid caregiving and household duties which are still largely borne by women in our society. Telework reduces commuting time, and thus reduces the pressure on women who find themselves struggling to fit work and personal obligations into the day.

Women are more likely than men to have physical difficulties with the workplace 2.0 office model. In CAPE's consultations regarding the return to the office, many women indicated that having to carry all their belongings back and forth was especially difficult due to both the weight and the sheer number of items that one needs for a comfortable day at the office. We know that women are overall more likely than men to take public transit and more likely to have to make stops on their commute (e.g., errands, childcare drop-off and pick-up), making hauling all their work supplies to and from the office even more onerous. A GBA+ analysis would note these unequal burdens.

Flexible work arrangements have been a gamechanger for thousands of women in the federal workforce and working women in general, leveling the playing field by providing them with opportunities to balance work and caregiving responsibilities. We are calling on you to provide a GBA+ analysis of this policy which honestly documents its unequal effects on women in the public sector. Further we call on you to stop the rollback of what is, in practice, a way to increase equity in the workplace and to consider the gendered benefits of telework.

We hope to receive a response from you as we frame this employer's approach to gender justice in its workforce.

Yours sincerely,



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cc
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Blake Desjarlais, MP

Gabriel Ste-Marie, MP