



The Corporation of

THE TOWNSHIP OF MELANCTHON

157101 Highway 10, Melancthon, Ontario, L9V 2E6

REPORT TO COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR WHITE AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: DENISE B. HOLMES, AMCT, CAO/CLERK

SUBJECT: FOUR-DAY IN OFFICE WORKWEEK PILOT PROJECT

MEETING DATE: FEBRUARY 19, 2026

Recommendation

That the Township of Melancthon implement a four-day in-office workweek for administration staff, operating Monday to Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., maintaining total weekly hours at 37.5, with the office closed on Fridays, effective May 4, 2026, as a one-year pilot project to be reviewed by Council on May 6, 2027.

This schedule will provide extended public access, maintain staffing adequacy, and meet operational needs.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval to implement a four-day in-office workweek for all staff on a one-year pilot project, closing the office on Fridays, while maintaining a total of 37.5 hours per week. The proposal includes extending office hours Monday–Thursday to improve accessibility and customer service for residents.

2. Background

The Township office currently operates Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., with four staff members working 7.5 hours per day (30-minute unpaid lunch). The Human Resources Sub-Committee has indicated that extended office hours would better serve the public, particularly those unable to visit during standard business hours.

Moving to a four-day workweek requires increasing daily hours to 9.5 while maintaining the same total weekly hours. This adjustment allows the office to open earlier and close later during staffed days, improving service availability.

3. Proposed Options

All options assume:

- Four staff members working the same schedule
- Office closed Fridays
- 37.5 hours/week
- 30-minute unpaid lunch
- No staggered shifts

	Option Office Hours	Opens Earlier	Closes Later	Notes
A	7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.	✓✓	—	Morning access for residents before work
B	8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.	✓	✓✓	Balanced access, recommended option

4. Risk Management

Potential risks and mitigation measures:

Risk	Mitigation
Staff fatigue from longer days	9.5-hour days include 30-minute unpaid lunch; monitor staff feedback and adjust as necessary
Resident confusion about Friday closure	Public notice, website update, signage at the office, voicemail messages
Statutory holiday impacts	Adjust schedules as per Employment Standards Act; communicate in advance
Emergency coverage on	Staff may work remotely or in person at the office, but the office will remain closed to the public, except for the third Friday in August

Fridays of an Election year, when the office must be open for Nomination Day.

5. Financial Considerations

- Total hours remain the same; therefore, minimal direct financial impact.
 - Potential savings in overtime expenditures for two staff members who regularly attend evening Council meetings.
 - Potential minor cost savings from reduced utility usage on Fridays.
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6. Benefits Summary – Municipal Experience with Four-Day Workweeks

Several Canadian municipalities have implemented or piloted four-day workweeks or compressed schedules in recent years. While approaches vary, the overall findings from municipal experience have been largely positive.

Employee Satisfaction and Morale

Municipalities that have adopted four-day workweeks have reported high levels of employee satisfaction. For example, the Municipality of French River (Ontario) implemented a compressed four-day schedule following a pilot project, with approximately 87% of staff opting into the arrangement and more than 80% reporting satisfaction. Improved work-life balance was identified as a key benefit.

Recruitment and Retention

Other Ontario and Atlantic Canadian municipalities, including Algonquin Highlands (ON) and Cumberland (NS), have cited four-day workweeks as a positive recruitment and retention tool, particularly in smaller or rural communities where attracting qualified staff can be challenging. Flexible work arrangements were seen as increasing the municipality's competitiveness as an employer.

Productivity and Service Levels

Municipal case studies indicate that productivity generally remains stable following implementation. In several Ontario examples, management reported no decline in service levels after moving to a compressed schedule, with some noting improved efficiency due to fewer interruptions and higher staff engagement.

Customer Service Improvements

A common benefit across municipal implementations is the ability to extend daily service hours without increasing staffing costs. By redistributing existing weekly hours over four longer days, municipalities have been able to offer earlier opening times and later closing times, improving accessibility for residents who work standard business hours.

Employee Well-Being and Absenteeism

Broader public-sector and international studies (including government trials in Iceland and Nova Scotia) suggest that compressed or reduced workweeks can lead to improved employee well-being and, in some cases, reduced absenteeism and burnout. These findings are consistent with trends reported by Canadian municipalities.

Summary for Council

Based on municipal experience, the primary anticipated benefits of a four-day workweek include:

- Improved employee satisfaction and morale
- Enhanced recruitment and retention
- Maintained productivity and service delivery
- Extended daily office hours for residents
- Potential improvements in staff well-being

Implementing the proposed one-year pilot project allows the Township of Melancthon to evaluate these potential benefits locally and determine whether the model is suitable for permanent adoption.

7. Next Steps

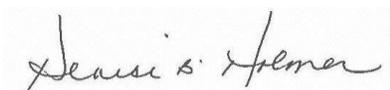
- Communicate schedule to staff with the anticipated start date of May 4, 2026
 - Update public website, signage, and voicemail messages
 - Monitor resident feedback and staff well-being post-implementation
 - Review effectiveness after 6 months and report back to Council on November 5, 2026
 - A further review after 12 months to determine if there is a desire from residents and staff to continue the four-day workweek on a permanent basis
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Attachments – Articles of Interest

- **February 9, 2026**, *The Globe and Mail*, Amir Barnea – *Let's give everyone a four-day work week*
- **February 27, 2023**, *CBC News*, Vanessa Balintec – *Rural Ontario municipalities are adopting the four-day work week. What does it take to get others on board?*

It should be noted that I have reached out to the CAO for the Township of Algonquin Highlands to inquire if she would be willing to share any feedback on staff experience, challenges encountered and her overall assessment of the change; however, she is currently out of the office until February 17, 2026. A further update will be provided to Council at the Closed Session Council Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise B. Holmes". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Denise B. Holmes, AMCT
CAO/Clerk

Denise Holmes

From: Denise Holmes
Sent: Tuesday, February 10, 2026 12:13 PM
To: Denise Holmes
Subject: Globe and Mail Article

Let's give everyone a four-day work week

Research shows that the benefits for individuals, society and corporations are all extremely positive

AMIR BARNEA

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED 5 HOURS AGO Amir Barnea is an associate professor of finance at HEC Montréal.

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This essay is part of the [Prosperity's Path](#) series. In a time of geopolitical instability and a shifting world order, the challenges facing Canada's economy have only gotten more visible, numerous and intense. This series brings solutions.

In 1930, at the beginning of the Great Depression, British economist John Maynard Keynes published a bold article with surprisingly optimistic predictions.

Keynes predicted – and was pretty much spot on – that within a century, the average standard of living in the world would be eight times higher.

But he went even further and conjectured that ultimately, the rat race will end. “In 100 years,” he wrote, “technological progress will allow the work week to be shortened to only 15 hours, or three hours a day.”

While Keynes forecasted future economic growth almost perfectly, he was dead wrong with respect to the amount of time we work today. His 15-hour work week projection is a far cry from the average 40-hour work week we have in Canada, and it seems like those 40 hours are experienced by employees as harder and harder over the years.

According to a [recent national survey](#) of 5,000 employed adults in Canada commissioned by Mental Health Research Canada, nearly 39 per cent of employees reported they feel workplace burnout, up from 35 per cent in 2023. This must change. Canada must adopt the four-day work week. Importantly, it's not just for the sake of individual workers' wellbeing. The entire economy will benefit as a result.

[Open this photo in gallery:](#)



British economist John Maynard Keynes, centre, in July, 1944. Almost a century ago Mr. Keynes predicted that 'technological progress will allow the work week to be shortened to only 15 hours, or three hours a day.' HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

Kitfox Games, a gaming studio in Montreal, has done exactly that. Five years ago, Kitfox, which employs 15 people, switched to a 4-day 100 per cent pay work week, and the impact on the team has been tremendous.

The idea to shorten the work week came from Tanya Short, Kitfox's chief executive officer. "The video game industry typically has what they call crunch, which is unpaid overtime," she told me at the company's offices in downtown Montreal. "That was never my interest, possibly because my first salary job was in Scandinavia."

She said that at first, a 20 per cent reduction in the working time was scary. But then she realized that getting consistent "good quality" 40-hours a week out of her team is extremely hard and will result in burnout.

"I fully believe that I'm getting better work out of people than we would if we did five days a week. The reason why I believe that fairly strongly, is that I feel like I observe it in myself," Ms. Short told me.

[Open this photo in gallery:](#)



Commuters board a bus in Toronto. Research shows that the benefits of a four-day work week are extremely positive for individuals, society and corporations. FRED LUM/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Kitfox's story is just one of hundreds of firms and non-profits who have implemented the 4-day work week model successfully around the world. That is exactly the path that Canada should take. Research shows that the benefits for individuals, society and corporations are all extremely positive.

Juliet Schor – an economist, and professor of sociology at Boston College – has the proof. She has been researching the labour market for decades, and in her recent book, *Four Days a Week*, she summarizes her findings as the lead researcher of 245 different experiments on shortening the work week conducted around the world over the past three years.

“The clearest evidence of the model's success is the fact that 90 per cent of companies chose to continue with the short work week after the trial period ended,” she said over Zoom.

Schor did her research in collaboration with Andrew Barnes, a New Zealand entrepreneur working in the financial sector. In 2018, Mr. Barnes decided to switch his entire company (of about 250 employees), to a four-day work week without a reduction in pay.

In his experience, a shorter week increases the productivity of individual employees and of the company in a way that completely offsets the fact that everyone is working 20 per cent less.

Higher levels of individuals' well-being that result from a four-day work week would ultimately translate to a significant increase in productivity across the economy.

Currently, burnout imposes a big hidden cost on Canadian firms. According to the mental health survey cited above, [“burnout costs employers between \\$5,500 and \\$28,500 per employee](#)

[annually.](#)” Recent evidence from the American Journal of Preventative Medicine also suggests that [burnout can cost an average American firm about US\\$5-million annually.](#)

Sure, in some parts of the economy, keeping pay constant while reducing working hours by 20 per cent would require some finessing. Consider, for example, nurses and doctors who work in shifts at a hospital, or employees at a local Tim Horton’s branch. But governments and public corporations alike need to find those funds and add more workers, as [shift workers](#) are among [the most overworked employees in the country.](#)

In fact, the extra costs paid for hiring additional employees for “high intensity” jobs, can be less than what is saved on retention and talent attraction. And as the world’s 10th largest economy, Canada has the capacity to do so.

Additionally, the fact that we’re in the midst of an “AI industrial revolution” means that now is the perfect time to pursue this structural change, since labour productivity is already on the rise. Implementing a short work week in Canada means that the extra profits which the new technology creates will be shared equally by all Canadians, instead of further enriching already rich shareholders.

With 39 per cent of Canadians feeling burnout, the sky won’t fall if profitable companies sacrifice a small fraction of their profits to give “life changing” benefits to their hard-working employees.

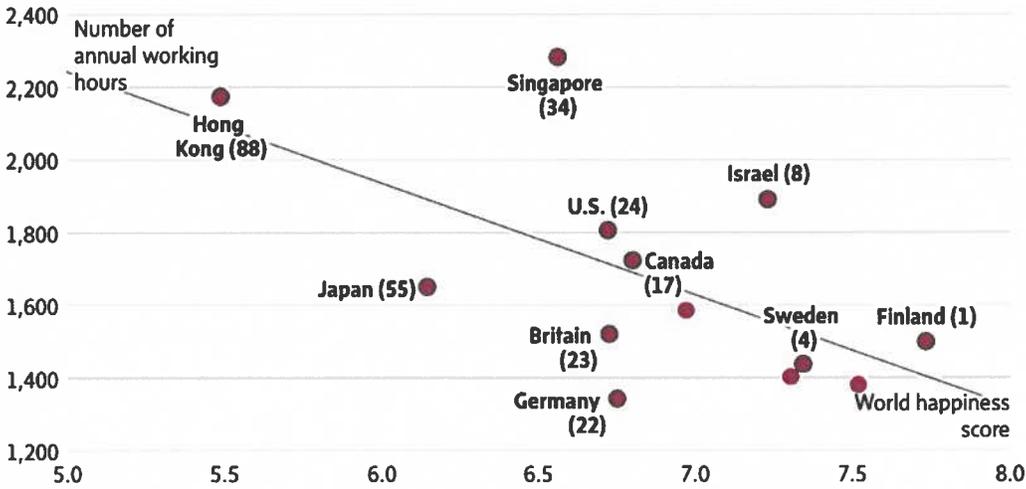
In collaboration with Canada’s largest unions, the public sector would be a natural place to start the design and implementation of a short work week. The legislation that follows should set a 32 hour work week as the new labour standard, with any hours worked beyond that defined as overtime and eligible for a higher pay. A 10-year time frame for the full implementation of a short work week should allow enough time for both the public and the private sector to make the necessary adjustments.

Ms. Schor agrees. “Within 10 years, I am certain that giant companies like Google and Apple will introduce a four-day work week. It will be the new standard in the labour market. Time and again, we hear from employees that shortening the work week by one day is a life-changing experience. That’s where we’re headed,” she concludes.

Keynes’ article [Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren](#) was written in 1930. So, we still have four years to evaluate his optimistic predictions. An end to the rat race still seems a bit far-fetched, but if we wisely use the new technology that was introduced to us, and if our policy makers make the right calls, maybe we’ll get a step closer to Keynes’s rosier guess that the real problem for humanity will be how to deal with all the leisure that science and compound interest have created for us.

Who's happiest?

Number of annual working hours and happiness scores, by country (rank), 2024



THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: THE CONFERENCE BOARD TOTAL ECONOMY DATABASE, MAY 2024; THE WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT, 2025

Effects of a four-day work week on work

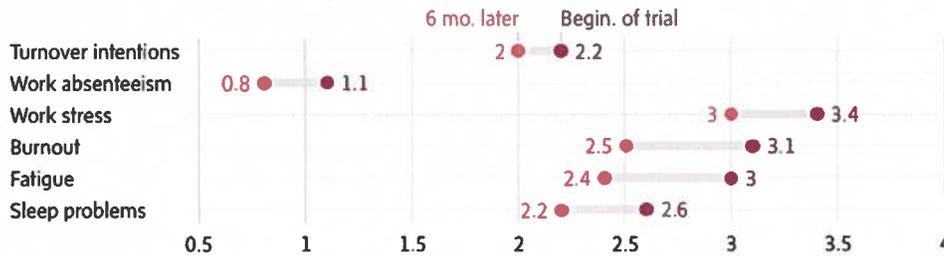
Work time, performance, and work design, scale 1-10



Work-related metrics based on employee surveys and interviews
THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: "FOUR DAYS A WEEK," JULIET B. SCHOR, HARPER BUSINESS, 2025

Effects of a four-day work week on health and well-being

Labour supply and work-related strain, scale 1-5



Work-related metrics based on employee surveys and interviews
THE GLOBE AND MAIL, SOURCE: "FOUR DAYS A WEEK," JULIET B. SCHOR, HARPER BUSINESS, 2025

Canada

Rural Ontario municipalities are adopting the 4-day work week. What does it take to get others on board?

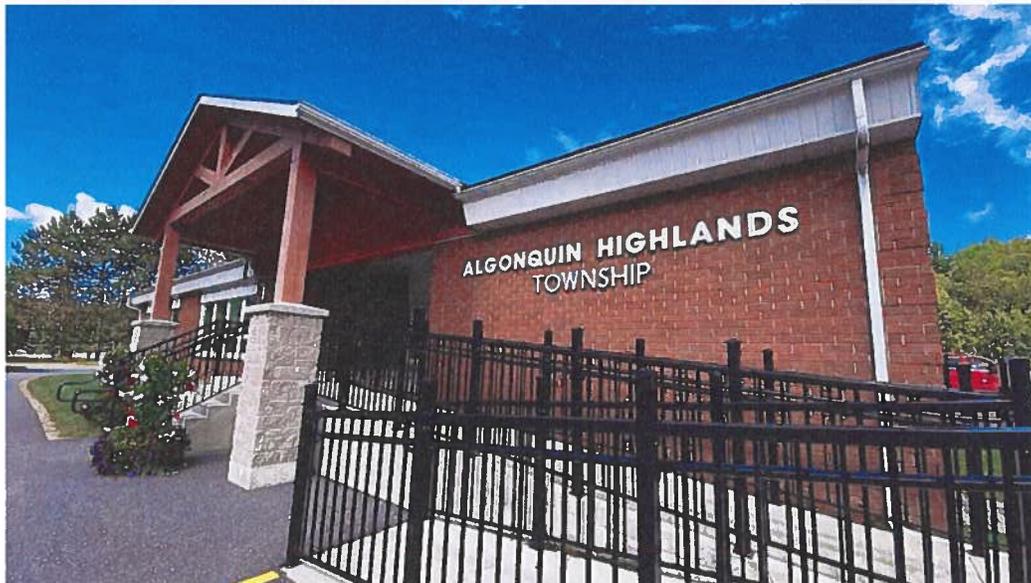
Local government and private sector can benefit from the switch, expert says

Vanessa Balintec · CBC News · Posted: Feb 27, 2023 4:00 AM EST | Last Updated: February 27, 2023



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Algonquin Highlands is one of a handful of small municipalities in rural Ontario that have started offering their employees the option of a four-day work week. The mayor says it's necessary to keep up with what employees want. (Submitted by Township of Algonquin Highlands)

 comments

Algonquin Highlands will soon be the latest small-town municipality in rural Ontario to convert to a four-day work week.

Starting in March, the cottage country destination will join the townships of Aylmer, [Zorra](#), Springwater and [French River](#) — all which made the same move in recent years in a bid to boost work-life balance and attract and retain staff.

Providing this option, along with other flexible arrangements like remote work, is necessary to keep up with what employees want, says Algonquin Highlands Mayor Liz

"Since COVID, people are looking for a different way of approaching life," said Danielsen. Her town, some 220 kilometres west of Ottawa, houses roughly 2,500 people but surges during the summer tourist season.

"We want to be seen as a dynamic and progressive employer when we are looking for people, and I think this will go a long way to help that."

Data released last week in the U.K. supports what Danielsen says. [Researchers found](#) an overwhelming majority of over 60 companies — which took part in what was reportedly the world's largest four-day reduced work week trial — will continue with the shorter week for similar reasons.

While municipalities are going forward with the compressed work week instead, one work expert says it's just one way different industries can mould the overall concept of the four-day work week to fit their unique needs.

- **Interest grows in 4-day work week as employers consider impact on staff, retention, productivity**
- **How the pandemic has some Ontario employers switching to a 4-day work week**

In Algonquin Highlands, about 95 per cent of the town's staff have opted to work longer work days in exchange for a day off after a seven-month trial period. Not only was this a morale booster, but it had minimal impact on services, Danielsen says.

"I think that that's something that you'll see more and more as time goes by, especially when others can see that it's working successfully."

What does it take?

Before the pandemic, four-day work arrangements were common for specific city roles, says David Arbuckle, the executive director of the volunteer-run Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario.

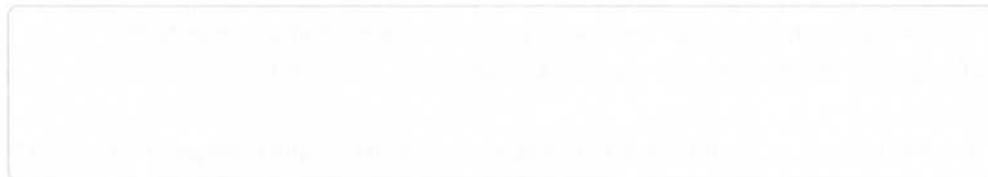
But since COVID-19 hit, Arbuckle says conversations on making those arrangements more widespread started to "creep" throughout northern and rural Ontario — areas where employee burnout and turnover are big challenges made worse by municipalities and the private sector competing for the same talent pool.

"We're certainly supportive of our members and for our municipalities to move in that direction," said Arbuckle.



Before the pandemic, four-day work arrangements were common for specific city roles, but are now being considered for other positions. (Shutterstock)

While four-day weeks can be difficult depending on the size of the community, the potential for this model to work in other, bigger municipalities and beyond Ontario is already there, Arbuckle says. [Saint John](#) and the [District of Guysborough, N.S.](#), have also already made the switch.



The main challenges are making sure employees get equitable access to this arrangement — four-day weeks are easier to implement for office staff than those in the field — that things like union contracts are accounted for, and that cities can maintain or exceed service expectations for residents, says Arbuckle.

- **[How flexible back-to-work plans could tap the talents of workers facing employment barriers](#)**
- **[This young worker quit amid anxiety and exhaustion. Here's how the pandemic pushed some people to rethink work](#)**

To ensure this, residents in Zorra, a township some 30 kilometres northeast of London, Ont., got an extra hour to access services each day. Alycia Wettlaufer, the town's deputy clerk, says both employees and residents benefit from the change.

"Residents have been able to get all their questions answered and their needs met the same that they would when we were all working the five-day, if not better," said Wettlaufer.



Alycia Wettlaufer, deputy clerk for the Township of Zorra, Ont., says employees and residents have benefited from the change. (Submitted by Alycia Wettlaufer)

While it was a challenge getting used to the longer days and working around everyone's different schedules, things changed for the better, she says. She can't imagine leaving for a job that doesn't offer the same flexibility, and says other cities and industries would benefit from exploring a switch.

"The younger generation, we look for more alternative work arrangements and for things that are different than the typical nine to five," said Wettlaufer, 28.

"I think that it is so great for work life balance and I just couldn't imagine going back."

Are other sectors interested?

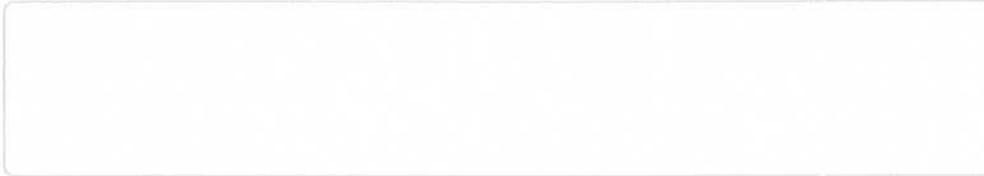
John Trougakos, a consultant and researcher with the Work Time Reduction Centre of Excellence, says municipalities are taking part in a compressed work week model, which squeezes the same total number of hours worked over four days rather than five.

This method makes sense for the public sector because no matter what changes it makes, it still needs to be accountable to the public, he says.

It remains to be seen how many of Ontario's 444 municipalities might make the change. But Trougakos says the four-day work week as a whole is likely to pick up as Canada continues to come out of the pandemic.

- **Noticing a labour shortage? Here's what's really going on in Ontario's job market**

"You're still going to have some organizations try to, for example, push people back into the office full-time, or forget about a work-time reduction model like a four-day work week," said Trougakos, who's also a management professor at the University of Toronto.



"But by and large, the companies that are going to be more effective and the companies that are going to see, I think, greater success, are going to find ways to implement various principles related to these issues."

Beyond municipalities, Trougakos says some in the service industry, along with manufacturing and the information sectors, are already embracing this model. In order to successfully implement a new way of work, each industry needs to carefully plan on what works best for their sector and workers, he says.

It's all an important shift compared to a decade ago, when people thought a four-day week was "some crazy idea," he said. But now?

"We're actually finding out that it is feasible."

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