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***The evolution of telecommuting: Ecoworking***  
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According to the Canadian Telework Association, about 1.5 million Canadians work from home, at least occasionally. While this has a beneficial effect on work-life balance for many, the most common complaint of teleworkers (workers who work from home using technology to communicate with their work colleagues) is that over time they feel isolated and miss the interaction and collaboration that someone would experience in a normal office environment.

Enter Ecoworking.

Ecoworking is a new way of working that combines the reduced commuting costs of teleworking with the collaborative elements of co-working. As an Ecoworker you perform your daily "work" in an environmentally and personally sustainable professional business centre in your community – typically no longer than a 5- or 10-minute drive from your home.

Ecoworking is working close to home but not working in your home, thus avoiding the many distractions and isolation associated with working from a home-based office. Ecoworking caters to two types of workers. One group is workers that

have a long commute to their regular place of business in an urban centre. It is also well suited for independent contractors, sales people and others who generally travel a lot by car. Rather than "parking" themselves at a Tim Horton's or Starbucks in between meetings, they can work from a local Ecoworking business centre, taking advantage of all of the modern technology conveniences of their regular office, state-of-the-art furniture and quieter work environment.

Ecoworking also allows the worker (and their employers) to feel good about contributing to reducing their overall carbon footprint. If 1 million Ecoworkers or teleworkers were to work at home just 1 day each week, in a year Canada would save 250 million kg of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions; 100 million litres of fuel, and 800 million kilometers of wear and tear on our highways and streets. We would save \$40 million in fuel costs, plus have 50 million hours of time to spend with our families, or on our non-work lives.

(<http://www.ivc.ca/cleanair/index.htm>)

Ecoworking is also about being conscious of the environmental impact of your work activities while at the same time improving your personal

work-life balance. According to information supplied by Smart Commute, which is a GTA/Metrolinx-funded organization dedicated to reducing commuting costs and the associated environmental impact ([www.smartcommute.ca](http://www.smartcommute.ca)), the average GTA round-trip commute is longer than anywhere else in North America, at 80 minutes. Think of the impact on your family life if you could cut your daily commute by more than 2 hours and use this time either to do more productive work or devote it to family time.

Plus, GTA traffic congestion costs the local economy approximately \$6 billion a year.

The trend towards working from home or working remotely from a traditional office continues to grow. 53% of Canadian workers want a work-from-home option to avoid long commutes and increase productivity, according to a recent Workopolis survey. Ecoworking is an opportunity to change the way we work and change the way we live and is becoming increasingly popular in large urban centres.

Why now? Technology is enabling Ecoworking to happen. New devices like the Apple iPad combined with "cloud computing" enable us to work anywhere. And working anywhere means we can work sustainably, both environmentally and personally. New video conferencing applications like Skype and Google Voice are making it affordable to make that important connection with coworkers and customers. Is Ecoworking the future model for companies in large urban centres? It seems that the market is trending this way and it will be interesting to see the adoption rate as mobile computing and other technologies continue to advance.

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