Serving GOVERNMENT, serving CANADIANS.

Real Property Services

Workplace Resumption

Practices and guidance for Canadian federal government departments and agencies in planning the re-occupation of physical workplaces in the context of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic

Notice: Intended for Department and Agency Heads and Interior Design Professionals in the Government of Canada

DRAFT v1 April 2020

Contents

Scope

The purpose of this document is to communicate PSPC's guidance for the resumption of occupation and use by employees of Government of Canada workplaces during the on-going coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

This functional guidance applies to all client departments and agencies who occupy office space managed by PSPC real property services in crown-owned, lease-purchase, and leased facilities.

Context

On December 31, 2019, the World Health Organization was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, China. The virus did not match any other known virus. On January 7, 2020, China confirmed COVID-19. Since then, there has been a global spread of the virus which has left health professionals on high alert.

Health Canada's Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) is working with provinces, territories and international partners, including the World Health Organization, to actively monitor the situation. Global efforts are focused on containment of the outbreak and the prevention of further spread. PHAC is working closely with the medical community to ensure that any cases of COVID-19 occurring in Canada continue to be rapidly identified and managed in order to protect the health of Canadians.

By mid-March, 2020, the Prime Minister of Canada and provincial leaders introduced social and physical distancing measures in an attempt to flatten the curve of COVID-19 spread within Canada. This meant that federal employees in non-essential services were asked to work from home.

Since that time, after several weeks of social and physical distancing measures and business and workplace shut-downs, industry and governments are looking at gradually opening up the economy, including workplaces. The Federal Public service is preparing its workplaces for resumption and seeking guidance on how best to gradually balance working from home (WFH) with office presence.

Considerations

Government of Canada modernization vision and goals

Over the last number of years, the Government of Canada has taken important steps to create a confident and high performing workforce that embraces new ways of working and mobilizing the diversity of its talent to serve the nation's evolving needs. It's worth noting that the new GCworkplace vision and objectives, supported by the 2019 Government of Canada Workplace Fit-up Standards, and design principles built on the agile and digital technology-forward activity-based working model is a big part of making that vision a reality and stands to be a big part of supporting our government's ability to respond quickly and seamlessly to future events and to serve and support Canadians, continuously, reliably and dependably.

Changing mindsets and behaviours

While the evolving COVID-19 Pandemic has led to the immediate adoption of a 'Work from Home' model across most federal departments and agencies, the Government of Canada must prepare for the eventual reintegration of its workforce into its physical workplaces. This planning effort must consider opportunities for accommodating flexible workplace options,

and new strategies for ensuring employee health and wellbeing throughout the process of reintegration.

For some departments and agencies returning to their existing office set-ups may present challenges, especially since while working from home over the last number of weeks, both employees and managers have discovered effective methods of operating remotely without being in paper-centric, office-based, inflexible environments. These new ways of working could come in conflict with decades-old office designs that don't consider this evolution and the resulting new mindsets and behaviours.

Lingering health concerns and fears

There may also be lingering concern among some employees about being in office environments where physical distancing will henceforth become necessary, such as building lobbies, elevators, public restrooms, lunch rooms, and other work areas, and where maintaining high level of cleanliness (of surfaces and high touch areas) are the norm and are a shared responsibility.

Key Criteria

There are two key criteria for the resumption of occupancy in federal offices, both focus on the health and well-being of employees who will be using the spaces:

1) Cleanliness – especially of high-touch surfaces and areas
2) Social \ Physical distancing - enabling employees to circulate and be in the offices within safe distance from each other (minimum two meters)

Practices and Guidance

Overview

Cleanliness

While a portion of cleanliness will be addressed by PSPC and departmental facilities management (FM) practices and procedures, as well as cleaning services provided to GC offices and buildings (see Property Management Practices for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) - English - April 2020.docx), a significant responsibility for maintaining a clean workplace will fall on occupants and users of spaces through their behaviour. There are three key areas of intervention:

- Individual use spaces, furniture and equipment
- Common use spaces, furniture and equipment
- Personal hygiene

For those three key areas of intervention, organizations should:

- Implement a cleaning protocol to ensure surfaces and tools are cleaned after usage
- Reinforce cleaning protocols for individual and common space especially for the first few weeks back in the workplace by using various methods and communication channels: signage, emails, screen pop-up, hallway TV message, etc.

Social \ Physical Distancing

Some measures of social distancing in federal buildings will apply to common areas outside of the operational zones, such as entrances, stairwells, washrooms, elevators, and lunch rooms, others will apply to the office spaces themselves, where people meet, work and eat. This guidance addresses the latter, with the Property Management Practices for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) - English - April 2020.docx addressing to the former. When it comes to the workplace, there are four key areas of intervention regarding social distancing:

- Individual workplace areas - including enclosed offices and workstations
- Collaborative areas - including open and enclosed meeting areas as well as social areas \ lunch rooms that are within operational zone
- Equipment rooms and other support spaces
- Circulation paths and areas

Note: Organizations should also establish a Workplace Visitors Guideline for allowing guests or visitors to enter the workplace. Consider the number of visitors allowed in the workplace at one time to ensure that social/physical distancing measures can still be adhered to as prescribed. Organizations may want to consider requiring employees to pre-register visitors and guests so the organization can monitor how many people to expect in the workplace.

Workplace Social & Physical Distancing Practices and Guidance

Individual areas
Resumption of office occupancy is about more than workspaces. Through PSPC's broad consultations with industry and partners, other themes around resumption require examination to help with determining how work is achieved using office space in addition to distributed and virtual work options.

Balancing office capacity with social and physical distancing
Broadly, the work of groups and teams will have to be looked at through the following lenses:

- Demand Planning - *managing volume of work*
- HR Policies & Benefits - *defining and expanding options for telework (i.e.WFH), office work, shift work.*
- Working in the Office - *operating practices and guidance – AS CONTAINED IN THIS GUIDANCE*
- Working from Home (WFH) - *guidelines to extend WFH*
- Workforce Preparation - *communication and training*

The following set of questions could help organizations and work unit management in their thought processes:


NATURE OF WORK

- What is the nature of work of employees? Can *Working from Home (WFH)* continue effectively for some or most? If so, what would be the appropriate ratios (i.e. percentage WFH and percentage working from the office?
- For those whose work lends itself well to WFH, do those employees have the mobility tools; laptops, smartphones, IM, VPN, Collaboration Tools/APPS, etc.?
- Further to above, what activities would benefit from/require a physical office setting; collaboration of multiple people in-person, engagement with external parties, access to specialized & unique technology platforms only available in the physical office, networks which are solely office accessible, etc.?
- Are employees willing and able to return to the office? Are they able to in light of childcare challenges, auxiliary office work support, transit, etc. What amenities of the workplace are crucial and warrant physical presence all while making employees feel safe?

Determining office attendance for when it is deemed optimal to do so

- Occupancy limitations will most likely have to be implemented in order to allow proper physical distance between occupied workstations or workpoints and reduce circulation collisions. Following the assessment of the nature of work, organizations and work unit management should examine the following:
- Current Workplace Layout and Design
    - o The current layout of the office will have to be assessed for implementation of 2 metre spacing between seats. If workstation rows or pods currently don't have the minimum spacing, then a staggered seating protocol is recommended.

    - o If the current workstation layout meets the minimum physical distance, then a staggered occupancy may not be necessary, however, limited occupancy of the workplace will still be required in order to reduce crowding in circulation paths and shared support spaces
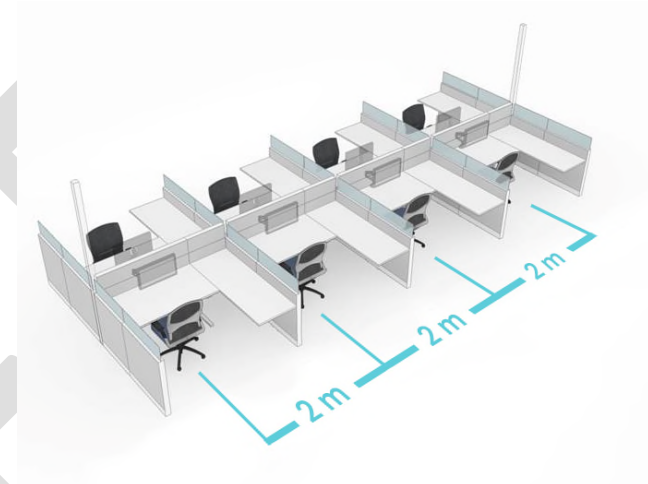
- Occupancy and Utilization Protocols
    - o It is anticipated that the most effective way to use the workplace upon resumption will be to allow all workstations and workpoints to be used by everyone, meaning no assigned seats. The flexibility that this strategy provides will ensure that staggered seating can be easily implemented, that no seats remain reserved and unavailable for use, and will facilitate cleaning and disinfecting by eliminating clutter and personal effects at the workstation.
    - o Occupancy shifts may be considered in order to allow the entire workforce access to the workplace, but at different times. Reservation systems or strategies will be necessary in order to monitor occupancy levels at all times.

Workstations or Open Workpoints

- Whenever possible, workstations should be oriented in a way to avoid face to face placement of seats. If furniture is reconfigurable, reorienting layouts as indicate below is recommended. If reconfiguration is not possible, the addition of privacy screens between workstations is recommended in order to limit the promulgation of germs.

Enclosed Offices or Other Workpoints

- Users may find themselves needing to isolate in response to uneasiness or anxiety during this resumption phase. Enclosed individual spaces should be unassigned in order to allow all users access to a private space when needed, and to avoid restricting

access and underutilization. Occupancy limitations should be implemented depending on the size of the room, in accordance with physical distancing protocols.

Collaborative Areas

- Enclosed meeting rooms, or other collaborative spaces should have reduced occupancy by removing chairs in order to maintain proper distance.
- All areas to maintain minimum clutter and accessories for ease of cleaning
- Whenever possible, doors to rooms should remain open to encourage air circulation
- Open collaborative areas should ensure proper distance between seats, or removal of seats. When users are oriented in a face to face manner, use table surfaces as distance indicators.

Equipment rooms, Kitchenettes and other Support Spaces

- Re-consider the immediate requirement for microwaves/fridges. If kept operational, ensure they are distanced and\or limit access and proximity to one person at a time with indicators\tape on floor as to the distance to be respected, and be wiped down after use.
- Use of kitchen areas including counter, sinks and other appliances should be limited to one person at a time respecting distancing at all times (marking the floors with tape where applicable), and be wiped down after use
- Due to their small size, use of equipment rooms, copiers and printers should be limited to one person at a time respecting distancing at all times (marking the floor with tape where appropriate)

Circulation Areas
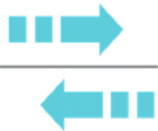
- Due to the width of circulation areas in most office environments, consider maintaining unidirectional circulation patterns for corridors throughout offices and workstations. Marking floors and providing adequate signage to reinforce the practice.
- Spaces outside meeting rooms should be marked for those waiting to enter, leaving adequate social distancing for people exiting.
- Conduct a thorough scan of circulation areas. Declutter pathways and limit potential for bottlenecks.
- Outline office pathway flows – to ease social distancing

Accessories

Privacy screens and dividers can be useful to provide barriers for physical distancing and to help delineate personal space. Universal worksurface panels can easily be attached to work surfaces and tables.

Freestanding privacy screens can help to delineate space and provide cues for circulation

Workplace Cleanliness Practices and Guidance

Facilitate cleanliness by seeking to significantly reduce the amount and number of surfaces to clean within the office and making everyone share in the responsibility of maintaining cleanliness and reducing risk associated with virus presence on surfaces and high touch areas.

Individual use spaces

- Adopt a clean desk policy – ask employees to clear their desks of clutter, papers, and store away desk caddies and other office supplies in drawers or storage lockers and overhead bins as available, making it easier to wipe down the desk area before and after use. Consider applying this policy universally in assigned offices and workstations as well as in unassigned desking areas, where it is already a standard practice.
- Ask employees to wipe down work surfaces, armrests and other high touch areas within the individual work areas before and after use. Consider applying this policy universally in assigned offices and workstations as well as in unassigned desking areas, where it is already a standard practice.
- Provide wipes and sanitizer broadly
- Provide guidance to employees via common communications channels to ensure they are aware of what is changing, what are the expected behaviors and emphasize the reasons

- Implement signage throughout the office space with special attention to entrances reinforcing the new cleaning protocol.
- Leave office doors open to minimize door/handle cleaning (notwithstanding privacy and security requirements)
- De-clutter offices and cubicles to facilitate circulation and access by cleaning services

Common use areas

- Remove all non-essential chairs in office area(s)
- De-clutter common use areas to facilitate circulation and access by cleaning services
- Have wipes/sanitizer for broad use as employees transition from area to area.
- Ask employees to wipe down work surfaces, armrests and other high touch areas such as meeting room control touch screens, and buttons on photocopiers and printers within the common use and meeting areas before and after use.
- Provide guidance to employees via common communications channels, as well as implement signage throughout the office space with special attention to common and shared use areas such as kitchenettes and equipment rooms, reinforcing the new rules, expected behaviours and emphasizing the reasons for them

Personal Hygiene

- Remind employees to wash their hands often and avoid touching their face
- Remind employees of other effective hygiene practices to avoid the spread of germs such as coughing in elbows, not shaking hands, avoid touching surfaces where not necessary.

- Provide hand sanitizer stations where appropriate, especially at entrances to office areas, asking employees to sanitize their hands as they enter operational zones.
- Provide guidance to employees via common communications channels, as well as implement signage throughout the office space with special attention to washrooms and kitchen areas where handwashing occurs, reinforcing the new rules, expected behaviours and emphasizing the reasons for them
- Employees who are not feeling well, think that they could be sick, or have a sick household member at home, should stay home
- Employees should make daily note of their interactions with others in the workplace as well as note the floors and areas they've visited or worked in, this will facilitate contact tracing in the unlikely event of an outbreak

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **How have departments who have implemented the new Government of Canada Workplace fit-up standards and GCworkplace office design (links) adapted to the "work from home" period of the pandemic?**

Many of the important steps to transition to a GCworkplace environment taken by departments as part of their implementation have been tremendously beneficial to them in response to the emergency measures. They include:

- Issuance of mobile devices, such as cell phones and laptop
- Increased remote access capability and capacity, as well as network capacity by engaging and collaborating with SSC
- establishment of flexible hours and locations of work
- adoption and use of virtual collaboration and meeting tools and paper-less work processes

PSPC supports departments in the implementation by helping them integrate these new ways of working and managing dispersed team ([GCworkplace Project Resources](#)).

2. **How is PSPC' Real Property Services supporting departments during the Pandemic?**

Many departments are finding that they have been able to adapt to the situation of forced working from home, but some are struggling. Maintaining momentum and supporting clients (and our own employees) during this time by building their capacity to leverage new technologies and help refine/build upon new workflows to support departmental resumption strategies including facilities and property management

guidance and workplace design, function and behaviour guidance, contained herein. PSPC RPS is also establishing a community of practice for workplace resumption to facilitate information sharing and informed, evidence-based decision-making across client departments and agencies.

3. **Not all offices have been modernized and not all are technology-enabled. Further, some have assigned desking in open concept officing clusters that could present challenges for physical distancing. What is PSPC's guidance on facilitating physical distancing in assigned offices?**

See guidance provided in section "Workplace Social & Physical Distancing Practices and Guidance" of this document. As the return to a physical office progresses gradually, it is also expected that teams will have some people continue to work from home for an extended period in order to ensure social distancing measures are maintained based on public health agencies' guidance. This time is also an opportunity for managers and their teams to re-examine the nature of their work and how best to balance focused work, collaboration and other key work activities with what work can continue remotely, and what work requires in-person office presence.

4. **I work in a shared GCworkplace ABW environment. What measures are recommended for those office spaces?**

See guidance provided in sections "Workplace Social & Physical Distancing Practices and Guidance" and "Workplace Cleanliness Practices and Guidance" of this document. In general, activity-based workplaces facilitate cleaning. They are inherently easier to clean and manage because workpoints

aren't assigned to individuals. Clean desks, without personal effects, facilitate disinfection, and allow usage and cleaning protocols to be implemented. Clean desks also have the benefit of dissuading dust and microbes from settling on paper, notebooks, personal items and office supplies (stapler, pens) often left on desks. According to best practices, workpoints should be cleaned by users before and after each use.

5. As part of resumption, will PSPC's GCcoworking sites be re-opened and support resumption activities?

Current Government of Canada workplace resumption planning includes consideration for the reopening of GCcoworking locations in the NCA and across Canada. These interdepartmental shared workplaces are built on the GCworkplace vision and principles and are well positioned to mitigate the impacts of work disruptions due to public health emergencies or severe weather (storms, floods, tornados).

- These kinds of sites offer an interim solution for departments ready to return to a physical workplace but whose current workplace set-up is ill-equipped to support some of the key resumption criteria regarding cleanliness and social distancing.
- GCcoworking provides those units, employees and their managers, that are already equipped with the resources and are familiar with the procedures required to work remotely, such as using mobile devices and collaborative virtual conferencing tools, a physical office environment suitable to their needs
- GCcoworking environments are paperless working environments, there are no printers or paper storage available. Employees that embrace this practice and make good use of electronic file management and

digital signatures, make it easier to conduct their work no matter where they are physically located.

6. Our offices have workplace refrigerators and microwaves and other small appliances. What is the recommended use of those amenities during resumption?

Please note that the cleaning of workplace refrigerators, their contents, and other appliances remain the responsibility of occupants. The prevention of the spread of COVID-19 continues to be priority and, as such, PSPC cleaning resources and services will focus efforts on the cleaning/disinfection of high-touch surfaces (reference Property Management Practices for Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) - English - April 2020.docx) Employees' understanding in this matter is very important; it is recommended that organizations include comprehensive employee communications to support awareness of new practices and procedures, understanding of expected behaviours, as well as the reasons behind the approach being taken to enable organizational workplace resumption.

7. What are the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the Government of Canada's workplace modernization plans and the current Workplace Fit-Up Standards? Will plans or the Standards be changed?

Government modernization plans as a whole are expected to continue as planned and may accelerate, such as the adoption of flexible and remote working and the relevant digital tools and processes. The current vision for a modern workplace for the GC, known as "GCworkplace", integrates these new ways of working and the concept of a robust virtual workplace into the design of the physical environment. The current Fit-up Standards and the GCworkplace design approach were

developed with flexibility in mind. Therefore, while small adjustments will be made to facilitate cleaning protocols, and support physical distancing, and certain user behaviours will primarily change in the short term, the approach and vision still stand. To continue to strengthen the federal public service's resilience, and build on the progress made, and in order to move forward more efficiently and accelerate modernization, our organizations must rethink past workplace design paradigms, mine the present situation for lessons learned, and create smart, scenario-based road maps for the future. PSPC looks forward to continuing this important work in partnership with organizations, departments and agencies across the GC to effectively equip the federal public service to face the future with confidence and to meet the needs and expectations of the public we serve.

8. Will there be opportunities for departments and agencies to be re-engaged in a conversation about the future workplace?

Yes. In light of the unprecedented situation caused by the pandemic, it is tremendously important to PSPC to engage in open discussions with stakeholders and partners on the issues that matter most. We are collaborating widely with stakeholders across the GC and with industry partners and suppliers to discuss the impacts to the workplace modernization program and specifically the strengths and opportunities of the GCworkplace vision and approach, and as well any potential weaknesses, in order to address them. The seven dimensions of GCworkplace will continue to guide us, and the design principle of "design for change", which is a tool for agility, will serve us well as we engage in these open discussions with departmental and other stakeholders about their experiences and concerns, consult with experts on the workplace issues raised by the pandemic, and chart the path

forward. For more information on how to get involved, please email the GCworkplace inbox.

Reference Material
Definitions and Terms

GCworkplace: term adopted by the Government of Canada for workplace modernization. It is based on the implementation of Activity Based Working (ABW), which is a way of working that offers all employees SHARED USE to a VARIETY of workpoints, allowing them to CHOOSE the optimal setting to perform their tasks and functions. It OPTIMIZES office space and is based on the seven DIMENSIONS of creating a flexible, healthy, efficient, inclusive, collaborative, green and TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCED digital space**.**

ACTIVITY-BASED WORKING: a mobile and digitally-enabled way of working that allows employees to untether from a fixed workpoint and choose a work setting that best suits their various tasks and preferences.

WORKPOINT: any space where an employee can perform their work, with the support of mobile technology and wireless network access. Includes both individual and collaborative settings in open or enclosed configurations to support a variety of tasks and varying degrees of interaction or concentration.

SPECIAL PURPOSE SPACE: a non-standard or "non-recurring" space (area not typically found in all offices) which is required by a department to accommodate activities that are unique and essential to the delivery of departmental programs.

Social / Physical distancing: A strategy to avoid the spread of a disease in which crowded places, large gatherings and close contacts are avoided and a distance of at least one metre (Government of Canada Public Health recommends two metres) is kept between people.

Contact tracing: The identification of persons who may have been exposed to a person infected by a pathogen to ensure that they are aware of the possible exposure.

Visitor: An individual who does not normally conduct their work activities in the building and therefore does not have the security access to enter the building. Depending on the building, security measures to allow a visitor to enter a building may require an escort, sign-in at a security desk, or only occupy those non-secure areas of the asset.

Documents

The following is a list of COVID-19 proactive and collaborative communications, presentations, and publications that have contributed information, expertise and insight to guide this document. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and that as new information comes to light every effort will be made to evolve and integrate it as appropriate and to share it widely.

[Government of Canada Workplace Fit-Up Standards](#)

[GCworkplace Design Guide](#)

Government of Canada Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Awareness resources
https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources.html

Media Scan (April 2020)

Will social distancing make way for a workplace distancing, *by HOK,* April 2020
https://www.hok.com/news/2020-04/will-social-distancing-make-way-for-workplace-distancing/

The new normal. What will it be, *Corenet*, April 2020
https://blog.corenetglobal.org/blog/the-new-normal-what-will-it-be/

What Will Tomorrow's Workplace Bring? More Elbow Room, for Starters *New York Times* April 2, 2020
https://www-nytimes-com.cdn.ampproject.org/c/s/www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/business/workplace-telecommuting-coronavirus.amp.html

What is the new future of work? by *Julian Chender, Workstyle Consultant, Veldohen*, April 2020

https://www.veldhoencompany.com/en/new-future-of-work-article/

Our office will never be the same after covid-19. Here what they could look like? video
https://www.fastcompany.com/90488060/our-offices-will-never-be-the-same-after-covid-19-heres-what-they-could-look-like?partner=rss

How To Manage Your Workspace During The COVID-19 Crisis, *by Relogix*, April 9th, 2020 - Webinar
From
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Km4iaaBpojc&feature=youtu.be&utm_campaign=COVID-19&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=86117951&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--yet94wBoDiVpUY4RoNAC6Osl9tsezjI3FdRNHOgSeisHWg2aS0cL6mtZp6Ebl9-EhScB1DlGcL8-bhUcp4zguALoLrA9eoqAFFOiv5Vu3IgmyQgA&_hsmi=86121769>

Space Planning and space design in a post-pandemic workplace - ioffice *by Tiffany Bloodworth Rivers*, April 14th, 2020 - article
https://www.iofficecorp.com/blog/space-planning-post-pandemic

This is what remote work will look like in 2020 and beyond, *by Chad Smith*, April 21, 2020 - article
https://www.iofficecorp.com/blog/remote-work-future

How covid-19 impact your future workplace policies, *by Chad Smith*, April 16th, 2020 - article
https://www.iofficecorp.com/blog/coronavirus-workplace-policies

This is the end of the office as we know it, *by Vox*, April 14, 2020
https://www.vox.com/recode/2020/4/14/21211789/coronavirus-office-space-work-from-home-design-architecture-real-estate

A new design concept called "six feet Office", *by Cushman & Wakefield*, video
new design concept called "Six Feet Office"

Corenet Global News, Survey results administered with 11,000 members for return to work plans, by David Harrison, document
https://blog.corenetglobal.org/blog/employees-will-return-in-waves-not-all-at-once-social-distancing-and-other-measures-will-continue-at-the-office/

Compendium of Reference Material *(PSPC GCDocs link will need to be updated with external link accessible to client departments)*

Enquiries

Departmental workplace and fit-up enquiries should be directed to the departmental Client Accommodations representative.

General enquiries on this document should be directed to the GCworkplace mailbox**.**