



February 28, 2023

Bruce Williams, CEO
Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce
#100 – 852 Fort St.
Victoria, BC V8W 1H8

Dear Mr. Williams:

Thank you for your February 22 letter sharing the concerns of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce and your partner organizations about the BC Public Service's support for flexible work for its employees.

I fully appreciate the challenges faced by your member businesses during the pandemic, and I commend you all for your efforts to help them navigate the past few years. I also understand your concerns and I can assure you the impact on downtown Victoria businesses was considered in our decisions around flexible work.

The first and predominant responsibility of the public service as an employer is to ensure government has the skilled professionals it needs to deliver the programs and services on which all British Columbians rely. In today's highly competitive labour market, offering flexibility is an essential step for us to be able to meet our obligations to the public and their elected government. If we fail to compete for the talent we need, there will be a real and significant impact to the lives of all British Columbians.

As important and necessary a step as this is, it is also important to recognize the true scope of the impact. At this time, the majority of public servants with flexible work arrangements are still attending the office on a part-time basis, similar to those in the federal public service, despite us not mandating they do so. Our research shows these part-time arrangements are preferred by most employees in the public and private sectors. So, while our approach allows for and supports full-time remote work, I expect many if not most of our employees will continue to work in the office at least part-time either by choice or for operational reasons.

Similarly, our direction to open up more job postings to communities across the province does not mean a widespread displacement of jobs from the capital region. The majority of these jobs will likely continue to be filled by qualified candidates in Victoria. It would be short-sighted on our part, however, to not take advantage of the potential to extend those opportunities beyond the capital for our benefit as an employer and for the benefit of more B.C. communities. Nevertheless, I have no doubt the BC Public Service will always remain a vital and important part of the Greater Victoria economy and community.

Sincerely,

Shannon Salter
Deputy Minister to the Premier,
Cabinet Secretary and Head of the BC Public Service