

Executive Summary

The nature of work has changed for Canadians. As the developed world moves into the information age, the accompanying technological developments are having a profound influence on work arrangements. The phenomenon of home-based work is a prominent and pervasive feature of the new economy. One quarter of working Canadians are involved in home-based occupations, and half of this number are self-employed. This type of employment can potentially have an impact on the urban system and the landscapes of cities.

Home-based work, with its characteristic flexibility, can be attributed to economic and social changes. Restructuring, downsizing, technological advances that make managing at a distance attractive, as well as changes in the structure of the family, are contributing to the rising popularity of working at home. Home-based occupations generate business and create jobs. However, most home-based work is incompatible with existing land-use by-laws, which are either too restrictive or do not allow for the variety of work activities performed by those who work at home.

Home-based work has the potential to create a variety of impacts upon the built environment and social life. Municipal planning and regulation are challenging tasks. Municipalities have a number of concerns respecting home-based work, however, traditional zoning methods to regulate it are not always appropriate or effective. Performance zoning or purpose-built subdivision design should be considered as alternatives.

The extent of home-based work varies dramatically at both the provincial and Census Metropolitan Area levels. Using the Statistics Canada 1995 Survey of Work Arrangements as evidence, a profile of the typical home-based worker is established. More frequently female, slightly older and better educated than their on-site counterparts, home-based workers work at home primarily because it is a requirement of their job and they have no choice in the matter. They work in service industries, usually as teachers or administrators. They work long hours and are often not compensated for the overtime work that they perform.

The 1995 Survey of Work Arrangements and the 1996 Census Public Use Microdata File provide insight into some of the regulatory areas dealing with home-based work. The datasets provide information regarding employment protection characteristics, home-based businesses, land use, and housing characteristics for home-based workers. Because of the potential impact of this growing work arrangement upon labour markets and land use, regulatory issues will likely receive more attention, and possibly create more controversy. The statistics presented are important for policymakers and planners, as this evidence provides the basis and rationale for intervention.

Seven key findings emerge from the analysis of Statistics Canada data undertaken in this report:

- Home-based work is pervasive. It is found throughout the country, and is not solely an urban, suburban, or rural phenomenon.
- Broad demographic patterns emerge among home-based workers.
- A large proportion of home-based workers work from home because it is a requirement of their job. In order to develop opportunities for home-based work

arrangements, the benefits of working at home should gain greater attention and be made more appealing to employees.

- The industries and occupations of home-based workers are not of the type that create significant environmental impacts. Although any home occupation has the potential to create traffic or noise, these elements can be controlled.
- Most entrepreneurs are home-based operators. Entrepreneurship has been responsible for a tremendous amount of employment growth in Canada in the 1990s. Facilitating home-based work helps create opportunities for entrepreneurship.
- Home-based work does not create instability within neighbourhoods. Mobility data indicate that home-based workers are less likely to move than on-site workers.
- Housing considerations should address home-based work. Two areas in particular should achieve a balance between the worker and the community – design solutions, both interior and exterior, and performance standards, to control environmental effects and nuisance.

Home-based work has implications for residential planning, community design, employment markets, community facilities, transportation planning and social services. The growth in home occupations calls for more recognition to ensure that home-based work can be integrated in neighbourhoods to the benefit of both industry and community.