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Subject: Proposal for the termination of office leases and the transition to full-time remote collaboration

**Introduction**

CIBC Wood Gundy is a full-service investment brokerage that exists in many locations across many different cities in Canada. The nature of the business has typically required them to lease expensive office space in central locations, such as the busy intersection of Bay and Adelaide in downtown Toronto. The recent Covid-19 pandemic, however, is pointing out inefficiencies in the way that we think about work. The recent transition to full-time remote work which has affected many employees across Canada and the world should be viewed as a welcome sign to the future of business operations. In fact, it has presented an opportunity for companies to reduce their overhead costs by transitioning their workforce to working remotely.

**Statement of Problem**

Businesses are most successful when companies cut unnecessary costs affecting their bottom-line. Rents, in the form of expensive office leases, have always been viewed as a sunk-cost, and a necessity to the successful operation of business. This dynamic, however, is rapidly changing. In Toronto alone, CIBC Wood Gundy has four downtown branches (all within walking distance of one another) for which they must pay expensive rents to occupy the location. Although working remotely is certainly a different experience than having a designated office space for employees, the ability to operate a successful business no longer requires an office space given the advancements in work-related technology.

**Proposed Solution**

The proposed solution is to terminate all office leases and to transition workforces completely online. The most obvious benefit, from an operation standpoint, is the cutting of costs and preservation of profits. However, we must also consider how this decision will impact the employees themselves. Perhaps most obviously, the transition to remote work will cut down on long commute times.

**Scope**

To identify the greatest risks to to full-time remote collaboration, I will set out to understand how the employees themselves feel about conducting their occupations from home. The following questions will guide my research:

• What is the general consensus surrounding remote employment?

• What benefits of office culture are lost with the removal of designated office space?

• What are the feelings of those who have already begun to work remotely were they to continue to do so indefinitely?

• Could the removal of designated office spaces be harmful to business operations?

• What are the greatest benefits (to employees and employers) of remote collaboration?

**Methods**

My primary source of data collection will be in the form of interviews and surveys directed at current and future employees. This type of data will hopefully shed light on whether employees would support the transition to remote collaboration. Current employees will be able to speak on the benefits of office culture whereas the conversations with future employees will help to understand how the incoming workforce feels about working remotely.

**My Qualifications**

I have worked for CIBC Wood Gundy for three years. This has enabled me to learn the operation of the business, and to make conclusions about whether work there could be conducted remotely. Furthermore, I represent the “incoming workforce” being a part of the group of graduating students currently seeking employment. This is an important distinction because the direction of the workforce will eventually represent the preferences of the younger generations. In other words, it is perhaps unlikely that those at the end of their careers would ever support full-time remote work, but as the workforce transitions from the old to the young, these opinions may change.

**Conclusion**

In the increasingly competitive business world, corporations must distinguish between the necessary and unnecessary costs to their operations. Where there is opportunity to eliminate these unnecessary costs, it is important to investigate the feasibility of doing so and this is the intention of the report. The aim is to show that the adoption of remote work would prove beneficial for CIBC Wood Gundy and other similar corporations.