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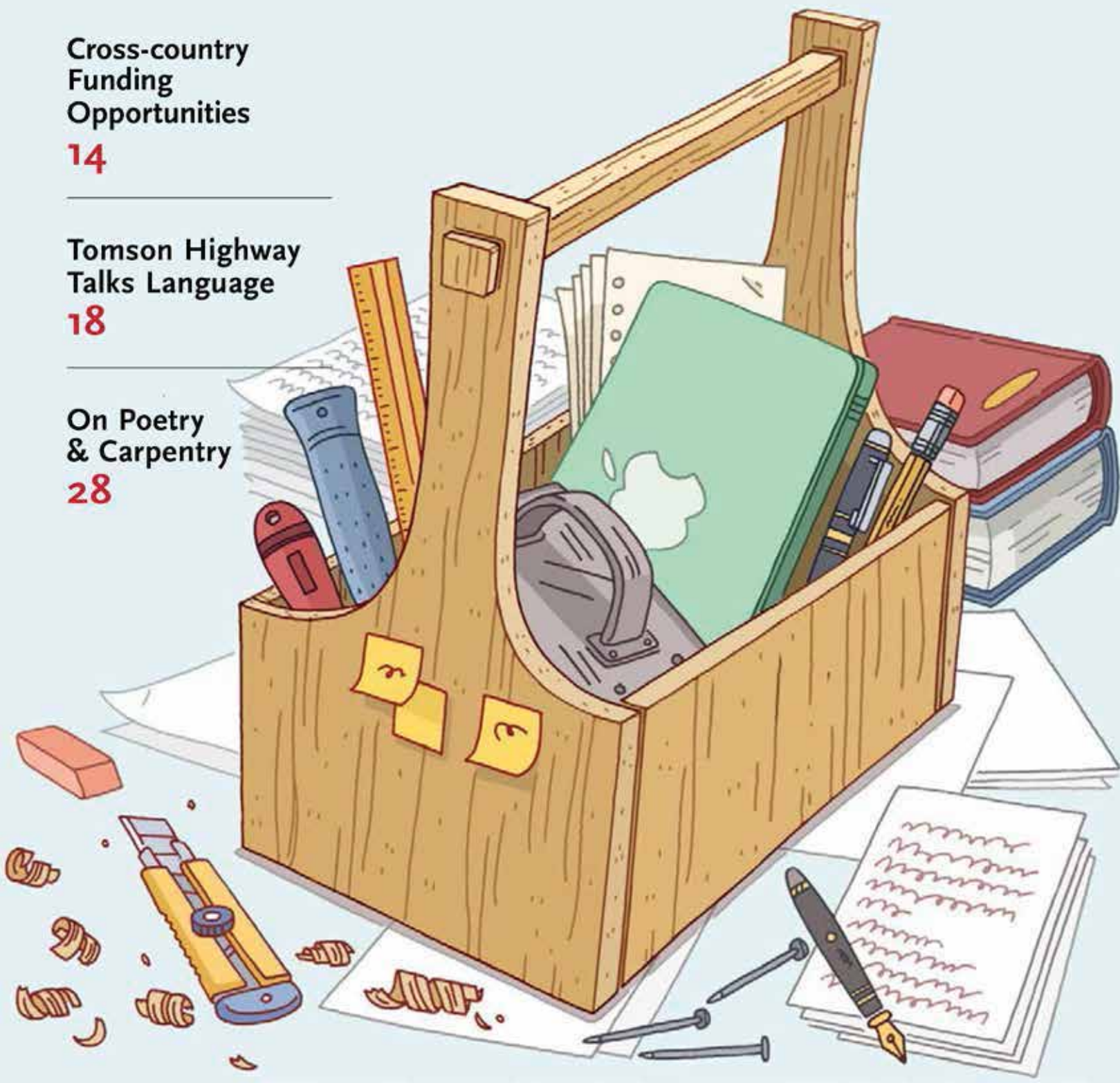
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WORK ENVIRONMENT /

Four Reasons Coworking Might Work for You

BY NANCY FORNASIERO



Coworking is exploding in popularity. With over 300 shared workspaces in Canada (and more opening every day), thousands of freelancers are proving that working at a coworking space beats working from home. Here's why:

1. ENHANCED PRODUCTIVITY

Home can be handy, but it's also full of temptations to procrastinate. Whether your distraction is "just a bit" of housework, refrigerator raids, or the lure of Netflix, hours can easily slip away while the keyboard sits idle. In a coworking space, with no distractions in sight, work gets done. "Our members tell us that being surrounded by other productive people is infectious," says Edward Wensing, co-founder of Toronto's Verkspace. Danielle Leonard, a YA novelist who writes at Oakville's ACE Coworking, agrees: "Seeing other people work in a focussed way helps me focus too. It's amazing how much more I get done away from home."

2. DEFINED BOUNDARIES

When you work from home, work tends to spill over into personal time, and, conversely, personal stuff interferes with work. Your neighbour drops by. Friends call in the middle of the day. It's always your job to run that "one quick errand." Flexibility is great, but when too many non-work obligations creep into work hours, it's a problem. And don't forget the flip side of the coin: Do you know when to power off your laptop? Many writers allow work to spill over into family time, couple time, and down time. "Setting boundaries is something I struggle with," admits Leonard. "Having a designated place to do my writing, one that I can travel to and from, helps a lot in separating my work and family life."

3. PROFESSIONAL IMAGE

Camping out at Starbucks is an okay temporary fix for the work-at-home blues, but it's not ideal. Connecting with a prospective client or an interviewee in a professional location with privacy makes a better impression than meeting in a noisy café. Most coworking spaces offer lounges, as well as meeting rooms that can be rented on an hourly basis. Copywriter Don Kerr uses

ACE Coworking when he needs to collaborate on a project. “I actually like working from home,” says Kerr. “But when I meet with a client or colleague, I prefer to not have them to my place.” Other professional touches offered by coworking spaces include front-desk reception and a business mailing address. And don’t forget that your stay at Starbucks is limited, whereas coworking facilities are typically open 24/7.

4. HUMAN INTERACTION

The community of a coworking space can be a great antidote to the loneliness we sometimes experience as writers. This point is important since studies have proven that social isolation can be a serious mental-health risk. And besides the psychological benefits that coworking offers, there are professional ones too: None of us is building a network alone at home! Coworking leads to connections with interesting professionals — not just other

writers. “Our members span so many verticals, from sports to digital start-ups to the entertainment business,” says Wensing. “One of my favourite things is seeing friendships and business relationships blossom here. It happens all the time.” In a coworking space, your mood is boosted, referrals happen, advice is shared, and there’s someone (other than your cat) to take a lunch break with.

Most coworking spaces offer a free trial day: Why not try it out and see what it does for your mood, image, network, and productivity?

Nancy Fornasiero is an author, editor and ghostwriter of nonfiction books. Her work has appeared in The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, En Route, Canadian Living, Parents Canada, and other regional and national publications. She does most of her writing in coworking spaces.

COWORKING SPACES: A SAMPLER

ACE Coworking

295 Robinson St, Suite 100, Oakville, Ontario
289-242-4873 / info@acecoworking.ca
Barrier-free access? No.

Verkspace

32 Britain St, Suite 100, Toronto, Ontario
416-286-5749 / info@verkspace.ca
Barrier-free access? No. The kitchen is accessed by stairs.

ACME Works

229 Niagara St, Toronto, Ontario
416-479-4458 / info@acmeworks.ca
Barrier-free access? No. The main entrance to the space has a small one-inch step leading into the main floor, which includes the kitchen, washrooms, games room, shared tables, and private offices. In addition, there are five private offices and our rooftop patio on the second floor, which is only accessible by stairs.

The Commons Calgary

1206 20 Avenue SE, Calgary, Alberta
403-452-7938 / hello@thecommonscalgary.com
Barrier-free access? Yes.

L’Atelier Coworking

319 W Hastings St, #400, Vancouver, British Columbia
(604) 652-4448 / info@ateliervancouver.com
Barrier-free access? Partially. There is a freight elevator but advance notice is required to use it. It is not always available and only a few people know how to operate it, so it is not ideal for everyday use.

Many Hats Workspace

3rd Floor, Bedford Basin Farmer’s Market
397 Bedford Highway, Halifax, Nova Scotia
902-456-1623 / info@manyhatsinc.ca
Barrier-free access? Yes.

Montréal CoWork

4388 St-Denis, Suite 200, Montreal, Quebec
514-613-7564 / info@montrealcowork.com
Barrier-free access? Yes.