

Live-In Caregivers: Policy Experiences in the Wake of the Fort McMurray Wildfire

[“Caregiver Policy in Canada and Experiences after the Wildfire: Perspectives of Caregivers in Fort McMurray,”](#) a new report looking at recent experiences of live-in caregivers in fire-ravaged northern Alberta, has just been released as part of the *On the Move* Partnership, a national research project studying employment-related geographical mobility in the Canadian context.

An online survey of 56 live-in caregivers (foreign nationals living in Canadian homes and employed to provide child or adult care) working in and around Fort McMurray, AB, was conducted by Dr. Sara Dorow, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta and author of the report. The invitation to participate in the survey was extended via the Fort McMurray Nanny Network.

Results of the survey revealed continuing problems with the policy changes made to Caregiver Programs in 2014 by the Government of Canada. A follow up survey with a sub-group of survey participants found that caregivers face a number of uncertainties in the wake of the May 2016 Fort McMurray wildfire. Issues affecting caregivers are exacerbated and exposed by the events of the fire as well as the oil price collapse.

Main Findings: Policy and Procedural Changes Affecting Caregivers’ Lives

- Caregivers are highly aware of changes to policies and procedures in Caregiver Programs, but find policy information difficult to access and interpret.
- Constant changes to policies and procedures are stressful and destabilizing.
- Policy changes made in 2014 compound or create new problems.

Main Findings: Transitions in Caregiver Status

- Changing employers can cause financial precarity, emotional stress, and diminished agency.
- Transitioning to permanent residency (PR) status promises freedom but is a long road with few bridging resources.

Main Findings: Effects and Experiences of the Fire

- The uncertainty of continued employment and housing – which, for caregivers, are tightly bound together – has been emotionally and financially stressful for caregiver evacuees.
- The fire has contributed to fears of disruption to income and to the pathway to PR.
- Caregivers have received multiple forms of assistance in the wake of the fire.

The report recommends that policy reforms focus on the root cause of many of these problems, namely, that the status of caregivers, like other temporary foreign workers, is directly tied to a single employer, greatly curtailing their choices as workers and members of Canadian society.

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