

*Live-in Caregivers: Under-recognized Contributors to the Oil Sands Economy*

“Live-in Caregivers in Fort McMurray: a Socioeconomic Footprint,” a new report looking at live-in caregivers in the oil sands region of northern Alberta, has been released as part of the *On the Move* Partnership, a national research project studying employment-related geographical mobility in the Canadian context.

Researchers conducted a survey as well as interviews and focus groups with live-in caregivers (foreign nationals living in Canadian homes and employed to provide child or adult care) working in and around Fort McMurray, AB under the Live-in Caregiver Program. The project was initiated in collaboration with the Nanny Network in Fort McMurray.

“Residents of Fort McMurray work the longest hours in the country, often on rotational shifts. Given the added factor of expensive and limited child care services, many families in the region turn to live-in caregivers to meet work-life challenges,” notes Dr. Sara Dorow, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Alberta and lead author of the report. “Live-in caregivers help to make the oil sands work regime sustainable by absorbing some of its stresses. At the same time, they experience stresses of their own, including the uncertainties of both the oil sands economy and the foreign worker policies coming out of Ottawa.”

By working long and often irregular hours, live-in caregivers save money for their employers and allow them to access the highest wages in the country, and yet they generally invest more to come and work in Canada than their employers do to hire them. They must also endure long years without their own spouses and children to care for other people’s families. While the opportunity to immigrate often makes these sacrifices seem worthwhile, the conditions of work in the caregiving stream, including weak monitoring and regulation, can make them vulnerable to employer abuses and workplace violations.

Substantial changes to the Live-in Caregiver Program announced by the federal government in November 2014 removed the long criticized “live-in” requirement but have also curtailed the promised pathway to permanent residence. The study shows how these changes potentially deepen the vulnerability of caregivers and the under-recognition of their contributions.

“Live-in Caregivers in Fort McMurray: a Socioeconomic Footprint” (report 52 pages; synopsis 11 pages, online at [www.onthemovepartnership.ca](http://www.onthemovepartnership.ca)) details the challenges faced by live-in caregivers, highlights the importance of paid caregivers to the local oil sands workforce, examines caregivers’ work experiences and life plans, and provides an analysis of the recent restructuring of the Live-in Caregiver Program.

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