



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY
OF WOOD BUFFALO

Council Meeting Presentation Request

Completed requests to make a public presentation must be received by 12:00 noon on the Wednesday immediately prior to the scheduled meeting. Presentations are a maximum of 5 minutes in duration.

Presentation Information	
Preferred Date of Presentation	January 22, 2019
Name of Presenter(s)	Rev. Edwin Rideout
Organization Represented	Legacy Counselling Centre - Family Christian Centre
Topic	Fly In - Fly Out
Please List Specific Points/Concerns	The Legacy Counselling Centre - Family Christian Centre have significant concerns with the current practice of industry relating to FIFO operations. We want to make our concerns know at the January 22, 2019 Meeting of Council.
Action Being Requested of Council	We are requesting that Council use its influence and authority to persuade and assist industry in making changes toward a more favourable practice.
Are you providing any supporting documentation (ie: Powerpoint)?	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
If yes, the documentation <u>must</u> accompany this request, as handouts will not be distributed at the meeting. To ensure that your documents meet minimum standards, please see presentation guidelines on the next page.	
Supporting documents may be e-mailed to Legislative.Assistants@rmwb.ca .	

As per Procedure Bylaw No. 14/025, a request to make a presentation may be referred or denied.

Legacy Counselling Centre Response to Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo Discussion pertaining to Industry's practice of Fly-in/Fly-out (FIFO)

Address To: His Worship, Mayor Don Scott, Councillors, Fellow Presenters, Industry Representatives...

In 2015, the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Western Australia, commissioned the Education and Health Standing Committee, to study The impact of FIFO work practices on mental health. In its ground breaking survey, it discovered that “Most FIFO workers are young or middle-aged men, a demographic already particularly prone to mental health problems and at increased risk for suicide.”

Lewis, Shrimpton & Story, examined the effects FIFO have on families engaged in offshore oil work in Newfoundland, and in the British, Canadian and Norwegian offshore oilfields. In spite of Industry claiming that there are few disadvantages to FIFO other than the potential inconvenience of prolonged work shifts, their research suggests that FIFO work has significant costs for mental health and well-being. *(Lewis J, Shrimpton M, Storey K. Family members' experience of offshore oil work in Newfoundland Women, work and family in the British, Canadian and Norwegian offshore oilfields. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988:163–89. And, Ryser L, Schwamborn J, Halseth G, et al. Working 'away': Community and family impacts of long distance labour commuting in Mackenzie, BC: Final report. Prince George, BC: Community Development Institute University of Northern British Columbia, 2011).*

Torkington interviewed eleven FIFO workers about their psycho-social well-being and perceived support. Some found their job rewarding and enjoyed interactions with colleagues, but others experienced loneliness, fatigue and problems in balancing time away for work with social and family time. *(Torkington AM, Larkins S, Gupta TS. The psychosocial impacts of fly-in fly-out and drive-in drive-out mining on mining employees: a qualitative study. Aust J Rural Health 2011;19:135–41).*

Similar research conducted by Knox, Warhurst & Pocock in a paper entitled '*You get really old, really quick: involuntary long hours in the mining industry*' suggested that, among workers with long shifts and low autonomy over their shift schedules, FIFO work can have negative repercussions for both work and home life. (Knox A, Warhurst C, Pocock B, et al. '*You get really old, really quick: involuntary long hours in the mining industry*. *J Ind Relat* 2011;53:13–29).

Joyce, Tomlin & Somerford's research suggest that such problems may be compounded by a failure to access support. FIFO workers have also been found to be less likely to report or seek help for mental health concerns. (Joyce SJ, Tomlin SM, Somerford PJ, et al. *Health behaviours and outcomes associated with fly-in fly-out and shift workers in Western Australia*. *Intern Med J* 2013;43:440–4).

FIFO work may also have significant impact on the well-being of workers' significant others. Most research on the impact of FIFO work on mental health or well-being has centred on workers' children. While a study by Dittman, Henriquez & Roxburgh found no differences between FIFO families and non-FIFO families in relationship quality, parenting competence, or child emotional and behavioural difficulties, (Dittman CK, Henriquez A, Roxburgh N. *When a Non-resident worker is a non-resident parent: investigating the family impact of fly-in, fly-out work practices in Australia*. *J Child Fam Stud* 2016;25:2778–96) a similar study conducted by Lester, Watson & Waters, showed that adolescent children's depressive symptoms and emotional and behavioural difficulties could be partially attributed to the intermittent parental absence that characterizes FIFO employment. (Lester L, Watson J, Waters S, et al. *The association of fly-in fly-out employment, family connectedness, parental presence and adolescent wellbeing*. *J Child Fam Stud* 2016;25:3619–26).

A study by Kaczmarek and Sibbel found that the partners of the FIFO workers reported more problems with communication, support and behaviour control within the family, than did families from the general community. (Kaczmarek EA, Sibbel AM. *The psychosocial well-being of children from Australian military and fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) mining families*. *Community Work*

Fam 2008;11:297–312). And a similar case study conducted in Canada by Whalen & Schmidt in 2016 discovered that FIFO couples can face numerous challenges, including transitioning between on-shift and off-shift roles and parenting. (*Whalen H, Schmidt G. The women who remain behind: challenges in the LDC lifestyle. Rural Society 2016;25:1–14*).

For further related data I refer you to a *qualitative study: Mental health and well-being concerns of fly-in fly-out workers and their partners in Australia* compiled and published by Benjamin Gardner, Kristie-Lee Alfrey, Corneel Vandelanotte, and Amanda L Rebar. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5855220/>

The Legacy Counselling Centre provides support to families and individuals in the Wood Buffalo Region. Our counselling team is comprised of four highly-skilled professional counsellors. Although, we rarely provide services to individuals who are active FIFO employees, we have, and continue to provide services to individuals and their families who decided to relocate, due to the negative consequences of the FIFO arrangement. We share one story, and for the sake of confidentiality we will employ the term Mr. X and Mrs. Y and minimize employment related details throughout the narrative:

Mr. X needed employment after his employment at the Lower Churchill Hydro project ended. He had relocated his young family (Ms. X and 2 sons ages 3 & 4) from Nova Scotia to Labrador to ensure that they could minimize time apart. Having relocated them 3 years earlier he did not want to relocate them again. Therefore, he decided to take a FIFO position at a site located north of Fort McMurray. Both Mr. X and Mrs. Y reported that the first 4-6 months was a nightmare. They all had trouble sleeping, and there were times during the day when they were overtaken by a deep sense of loss and loneliness.

It was during the 6th month that the first act of infidelity occurred. This was followed by several others. Through tears and deeps sobbing, Mrs. Y related her story to one of our counsellors. After considerable reflection and much therapy both Mr. X. and Mrs. X attributed the root cause as being 'separation' and a sense of 'emotional abandonment'.

Thankfully, Mr. X was determined to salvage his relationship with Mrs Y and his family. Immediately upon disclosing her infidelity they both decided to relocate to Fort McMurray. In the interim Mr. X decided to secure employment as a 'Security Guard' until he could obtain employment with his trade, as a Mechanic within a daily commute of the city.

16 months later, the LCC counsellor who has been journeying with them reports; that they are thriving as a couple and as a family.

There is little doubt, that the FIFO arrangement has significantly more negative than positive affects both on the individual employee and the families they represent. The Financial Post May 12, 2016 notes that ConocoPhillips Canada, has about 23 per cent of its Canadian workforce listed as FIFO workers. Just 26 employees have Fort McMurray residences, or about 1 per cent of Canadian employees. From our vantage point, this is an unacceptable practice and one that should not be allowed to continue.

However, in certain circumstances Industry and employees are faced with limited choices, i.e. in situations where the demand for the particular skill-set is short-term. In such cases it is not feasible in many respects for employees and their families to relocate for employment that will only last 1-3 years.

On the other hand, in instances where the employment is long-term, we believe every effort should be made to assist families with relocating to within a reasonable commuting distance. Doing so will minimize the travel distance and reduce the amount of time when families are separated. With this in mind, we offer the following as viable options for industry operations in Northern Alberta to consider:

1. Utilize the Fort McMurray Airport as a primary base for employees flying in and out of remote northern sites, such as, Kearl Lake, Firebag, Fort Hills, etc. This will reduce travel time and make living in Fort McMurray much more attractive and feasible.
2. Shorten work-shifts to 7/7 to allow families to reconnect on a much shorter basis. Being able to fly in and out from YMM will make this quite viable and even preferable.
3. Provide employees incentives to relocate their families to Fort McMurray, i.e.,
4. Relocation allowances, assistance with securing down payments on purchasing a home in Fort McMurray, mortgage assistance programs, etc.
5. Engage in a study such as was done in Australia to gauge the mental health and family impacts of fly in fly out.

6. Give preference to local workers and do not compel them to relocate out of the region so they can fly back in for work.

7. Transition away from camps where the commute time to Fort McMurray is reasonable and have employees based in the urban service area. This will strengthen the quality of life for employees and their families and support the region.

His Worship, Mayor Don Scott; Councillors, Fellow Presenters, Industry Representatives. With all due respect: the time has come to address this matter. The status quo is not acceptable to any of the parties involved. As a spiritual leader in this City who has devoted just over a decade to serving people, and often in their most vulnerable seasons. I humbly submit this appeal.

Rev. Edwin R. Rideout, BTh.; MDiv.; DMin (pending);
Chairperson, Legacy Counselling Centre Board of Directors