



LIVING WITH
FLY-IN / FLY-OUT
EXPERIENCES OF **WOMEN** AND
NORTH SHORE COMMUNITIES



Photo : Jean Murray

By
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INTRODUCTION

Fly-In/Fly-Out (FIFO) is an increasingly popular work practice in resource development companies. Practised since the 1960s in Canada (McDonag 2010), it has gradually replaced the traditional model of single-industry communities, which until then had been the norm when a company wanted to exploit a natural resource far from urban centres (Storey 2016). Today, mining companies are increasingly turning to FIFO, and several mining sites in Quebec now rely entirely on this arrangement, such as Raglan Mine (Nunavik), the Éléonore Mine (Eeyou Istchee), and the Lac Bloom Mine (North Shore). Thus, a few thousand employees from Quebec are flown weekly to mines in northern Quebec or to other Canadian provinces and territories to work several days in a row before returning home for their rest period.

On the North Shore, FIFO is particularly significant, as several hundred residents regularly leave their communities to work on mining sites in northern Quebec or Canada. Meanwhile, the mining and hydroelectric sites

on the territory receive several thousand workers each week who transit through nearby communities such as Fermont, Schefferville, Havre-Saint-Pierre, and Port-Cartier. On the Lower North Shore, the decline in fishing jobs has led many residents to leave their communities and turn to FIFO employment in construction or natural resources.

These regular, large-scale, movements of labour seem to have had considerable impacts, as much on the workers themselves as on their families, their host community, and their home community. Women are particularly affected (Joncas 2015). Although the economic benefits of FIFO have been documented in the scientific literature since the 1980s (Storey 2001), the emerging social issues associated with commuting have been very little studied, and the reported data raise questions about the sustainability of communities with large numbers of commuters, either as residents or as transients (Storey 2010; Bourgeois 2017). Moreover, opinions are not always



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unanimous on the impacts or on the actions to be taken regarding this increase in commuting. For example, in Queensland, Australia, the Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee (2015) states that an all-commuter workforce may be required for some resource development or construction projects. On the other hand, a research team mandated by the Australian government (Department of State Development 2015) concluded that the increase in non-residents has a negative impact, notably on employment and on the economic sustainability of working communities, and that, consequently, no resource development or construction activity should have a workforce composed solely of commuters if a community is close enough for secure access to the work site. Following this study, the State of Queensland decided to regulate the practice by prohibiting use of a workforce composed solely of commuters for major development projects. It introduced a regulation to prevent discrimination against local workers during hiring and adopted a hierarchy of recruitment that gave priority to employees from local communities.

For all these reasons, and with funding from the Société du Plan Nord, the Northern Sustainable Development Research Chair and the Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord conducted a study on fly-in/fly-out on the North Shore. The study especially focused on the impacts of this practice on women and North Shore communities.

This report presents the main results and highlights of the study, specifically the various impacts of FIFO on commuting workers and their families and the sustainability of the North Shore communities visited for the study. Finally, in light of the impacts encountered, the research team offers several recommendations that aim to limit these impacts to some extent.

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this document, long-distance commuting generally refers to a worker who must be away from home for several consecutive days in order to work and who only returns home for his rest period (Jones 2015; Storey 2010; Bourgeois 2017). Transportation from home to work can be by car, boat, or plane. Thus, this work practice is characterized less by the distance between the worker and his home than by the remoteness he must live for a defined period of time (Jones 2015). The employer generally assumes the costs associated with the distance by paying for the employee's transportation, accommodation, and meals (Storey 2010). The work periods of long-distance commuters in Canada are generally 7-7 (seven working days for seven days off), 14-14, 21-21, or 21-7 (Bourgeois 2017). Many other variations exist, and their popularity varies from region to region.

CASES UNDER STUDY

In response to the lack of data, the Regroupement des femmes de la Côte-Nord and the Northern Sustainable Development Research Chair organized focus groups and conducted interviews with workers, wives, municipal councillors, and social and community service workers. The focus groups were organized between 2017 and 2019 in six different communities that were chosen because of their important role in long-distance commuting. It should be noted that a relatively small number of people were interviewed in each community. In this sense, the data cannot be generalized to the entire community and even less so to the entire North Shore. Nonetheless, the data do point to the presence or absence of a problem among groups of people closely affected by commuting, thus making it possible to distinguish certain trends among the communities.



Table 1. Communities Visited and Participants Interviewed

	Focus Groups	Individual Interviews
Sacré-Cœur	5 commuters' wives	
Sept-Îles	4 municipal councillors 4 social service workers	
Fermont	7 residents 3 groups of commuters: • 6 commuters • 5 commuters • 2 women commuters	A social service worker 2 municipal councillors 2 business owners An elementary school employee
Havre-Saint-Pierre	3 commuters' wives 3 social service workers	A resident A member of the municipal administration A member of the municipal administration and commuter's wife
Schefferville and Matimekush-Lac-John	5 members of the Matimekush-Lac-John Band Council 2 social service workers (Matimekush-Lac-John)	A resident (Schefferville) A member of the municipal administration (Schefferville) A resident (Matimekush-Lac-John)
Lower North Shore	5 members of the Coasters Association (Rivière-Saint-Paul) 3 commuters' wives (Chevery) 2 commuters' wives (La Tabatière)	A commuter (Rivière-Saint-Paul) A representative of the Coasters Association (Rivière-Saint-Paul) A school principal and commuter's wife (Chevery) A health care worker (Mutton Bay) A health care worker (Mutton Bay)

RESULTS

The comments by the various stakeholders were analyzed in the light of various studies—mainly Canadian and Australian—that have already been conducted on long-distance commuting and its impacts. The interviews enabled the research team not only to validate this literature but also to nuance and deepen our understanding of the realities experienced by women and communities in the region, particularly regarding governance issues and women's involvement in communities, for both host and source communities. This section summarizes the main elements of the long-distance commuting experience in the lives of workers (Fermont), wives (Sacré-Cœur, Havre-Saint-Pierre, La Tabatière, Chevery), and various other stakeholders (social and community services, elected officials, residents) in the source communities (Sacré-Cœur, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Sept-Îles, La Tabatière, Chevery, Rivière-Saint-Paul) and the host communities (Fermont, Schefferville, the Innu Nation Matimekush-Lac-John, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Sept-Îles).

WORKING MEN AND WORKING WOMEN

The workers have many reasons for choosing a job that requires long-distance commuting. Although their main reason for choosing FIFO seems to be the generally high pay and benefits, it seems they were just as attracted by the shift schedule. Indeed, some workers said that being home for several days in a row provides an interesting work-life balance, which in some cases facilitates childcare or enables the wife to keep her job in their home community. It should also be noted that commuting enables many families to remain in their home region despite the few jobs available.

« Dans ce temps-là, j'avais rencontré une fille en bas, [...] elle ne pouvait pas monter, elle avait des enfants avec d'autres pères, fait que tu peux pas partir pis t'en aller. Fait qu'il y a des contraintes qui ont fait que c'était plus facile pour moi de m'en venir en mode fly-in fly-out. C'est la recette gagnante que j'ai gardée »

(Commuter, Fermont).

The shift schedule seems to be an important reason why the workers and their families appreciate commuting—it makes for a better work-life balance. Schedules with short work periods, where the number of days off are equal to the number of working days (7/7, 14/14), are the most appreciated. Furthermore, multiples of 7 make it possible to leave and return to one's home community always on the same day of the week. However, too frequent shift rotations give the worker the feeling of being always on the move, and this constant adaptation to a new pace of life can be exhausting.

« Pis t'sais, comme le fait que t'es 14 jours de nuit ou t'es 14 jours de jour, bien ça te donne le temps de te reposer avant de reprendre ta séquence mettons de nuit ou de jour, tandis que le 4-4, lui, il se vire aux 4 jours, ça fait que ça c'est plus difficile sur le corps »

(Woman commuter, Fermont).

The workers we met all talked about the fatigue they experienced during the last few days of work, as well as the rest time they needed during the first few days at home. This rest time is said to be beneficial and effective, enabling them to cut themselves off from work and devote themselves entirely to something else.

« Moi j'ai vu que quand il a commencé à travailler à l'extérieur, que quand il était chez nous, il était chez nous. On avait du temps de qualité ensemble, puis il y avait personne qui pouvait l'appeler, 'ok là tu rentres'. Il était là au complet. [...] On n'avait pas de temps de qualité ensemble, tandis que là, quand il est là le 21 jours, il prend le temps, il va jouer avec les enfants »
(Spouse, Sacré-Cœur).

Despite this quality time, the commuters also said they miss important moments in the lives of their family and friends because they often cannot leave the host community during their work period. Moreover, their schedules do not necessarily match those of their loved ones, thus complicating relationships with friends and family. This situation affects their family, their social life, and their involvement in the home community.

« But there's also stress on the men also, because they're missing on the first, they're missing on raising their children, then they tend not to know how to raise their children. Some end up with substance abuse, which mine did, like heavy »
(Wife, La Tabatière).

Finally, during their work periods, most of the commuters seem to prefer a full schedule, since few other pastimes are available. Nevertheless, reconciling work and recreation is said to be easier in communities like Fermont, where recreational activities are organized in line with the shift schedules.

WIVES AND FAMILIES

One of the biggest impacts of commuting for the wives we met thus seems to be the constant adaptation required by the commuters' families. First, for couples who appreciate having a certain degree of independence, commuting generally appears to be beneficial for the equilibrium of married life. In other cases, because of the pressure it can put on the whole family, it also contributes to the break-up of some couples. As partners' lifestyles and holidays are often difficult to reconcile, they must constantly adapt to each other's expectations and constraints.

« I guess, well it wasn't just that, but we ended up divorced 2 years ago. Because of the stress on the woman. Yes obviously, because she's raising the kids by herself, and she has to do everything herself »
(Wife, La Tabatière).

For wives, the commuters' absences often seem to cause stress and anxiety, as they must then go through many hardships and moments of life alone. In addition, many tasks of all kinds rest on their shoulders. While some wives, particularly on the Lower North Shore, feel that their partner's prolonged absence makes them more independent, others put more emphasis on the psychological distress caused by this separation. At such times, support from family, friends, and co-workers is necessary for these women.



« C'est plus les épreuves que tu as à passer que tu sais, un enfant qui est malade... Tu es toute seule là, tu ne peux pas dire qu'ok ça va être lui qui va se lever durant la nuit pour s'occuper de l'enfant, tu es toute seule. Affronter la maladie : j'ai toujours les mauvaises nouvelles quand lui il n'est pas là. On a appris à Noël que ma mère avait un cancer, bien c'est quelque chose que j'ai à traverser toute seule, parce que lui n'était pas là. Après ça, j'ai appris que moi j'avais des chances d'avoir un cancer pour ma glande thyroïde, il n'était pas là »

(Spouse, Sacré-Cœur).

the opportunity to see their friends or find a pastime while waiting for their partner to return. Consequently, community involvement is not systematically set aside by the wives, but commuting is certainly a lifestyle-changing factor.

« C'est ça si tu veux t'impliquer dans la communauté, ça te prend une gardienne. Faut que tu payes la gardienne, puis ça te coûte de l'argent pour t'impliquer dans la communauté dans le fond. Moi je pense que je n'ai pas le temps, je me dis qu'un jour, je vais avoir plus de temps pis je le ferai, mais je fais des petites affaires que je peux en attendant »

(Spouse, Sacré-Cœur).

At the same time, while they establish a certain routine to manage all the daily tasks, the husband's return is perceived by many as a source not only of relief but also of disruption, since a new routine must then be put in place.

« Like me, I've seen myself organize differently. When Nick is gone, I make sure lunch time I take something out, or even I cook something lunchtime, and I make sure that tonight we're gonna have the leftovers. It's on my shoulders. I'm by myself, so I plan more. When Nick is home, ah! [...] We're this week totally disorganized! But I rely on him, and I plan better when he's not there »

(Wife, Chevery).

For children, it seems that commuting most visibly impacts discipline. Indeed, for some wives we met, the father either does not really exercise discipline or is a factor that alters the routine established with the children. This is also why the whole family has to adapt when the commuting spouse arrives and leaves.

« When he used to come home, because then we had this routine, and me and the kids were fine. And then he would come home and that routine was gone out the window. All the rules I had and all the routine, well he didn't want to do that. So obviously he was just coming home for a week or two. [...] Because dad is only visiting, dad only visits »

(Wife, La Tabatière).

Commuting is also said to affect wives in their social lives, activities, and level of community involvement. Some said they do fewer activities outside the house because they have to care for their children alone, while others seize

While some mothers and social service workers noted that the father's repeated absences seemed to put children at greater risk of developing behavioural and learning problems, wives on the Lower North Shore pointed out that commuting, combined with the isolation and small size of the region's communities, enabled children to assume more responsibilities and become independent faster. Finally, other women pointed out that commuters were sometimes poor role models for young people in the community, who saw only the positive side of commuting without necessarily being exposed to its rather negative side.

Women accepted this lifestyle mainly for financial reasons. However, this financial benefit could entail some risk of economic dependence for the wife or limit her job prospects, since some had quit their jobs or limited their career prospects so that their husband could take on this kind of work. In addition, their career development was sometimes hindered because they had to stay home and take care of the children.

*« Dans le fond, dans nos choix de carrière, des fois ça a un effet. Moi j'ai été enseignante de carrière, je suis enseignante, [...]. Ça a comme un peu un effet, puis je pense que je ne suis pas la seule qui sent ça. Puis je pense que des fois, on a beaucoup de femmes dans le village qui peut-être feraient d'autres choses, mais à cause de cette réalité-là qu'on est souvent toutes seules, on ne peut pas faire des choix des fois qui sont... [...] Des fois ça peut être difficile, je pense, puis ça peut mettre peut-être des bâtons dans les roues »
(Spouse, Chevery).*



HOME COMMUNITIES

For home communities, commuting seems to have a positive economic impact. Commuters generally earn a high wage, which they mostly spend when they return to the home community during their time off. However, since workers can find well-paying jobs outside their town or village, a labour shortage may develop locally because local businesses often cannot offer the same wages as those offered by mining companies.

« Il y a beaucoup de commerces comme ça qui ont fermé, parce qu'ils se trouvent à faire du 7 jours sur 7. T'es au centre d'achat, t'es obligé de voir ton commerce ouvert, sinon il ne roule pas. Il faut que tu le paies ton emplacement. Puis, on a beau dire salaire minimum, bien le salaire minimum si t'es pas capable de... T'as pas personne qui l'accepte parce qu'ils sont payés 2 fois plus pour une job d'été on va dire ailleurs, bien ils vont choisir une job plus payante. T'sais y'a des accommodements aussi pour les petits employeurs qui ne sont pas évidents »

(employé dans le domaine des services sociaux, Sept-Îles).

Similarly, because commuters generally earn higher wages than other workers in the community, there tend to be more social inequalities and less social cohesion. In communities such as Sept-Îles, where mining booms have a significant impact on housing prices, these inequalities are reported to cause social exclusion of some people, particularly women.

« Parce que c'était mieux de travailler à la mine ou dans des grosses boîtes que de te retrouver commis chez Rossy ou chez IGA. [...] Tu ne gagnes pas assez d'argent, donc ton image sociale aussi, tu sais même par rapport à tes enfants aussi. Tu fais partie des pas bons qui vont faire des grosses jobs qui n'ont pas les grosses maisons là »

(employé dans le domaine des services sociaux, Sept-Îles).

In addition, commuters tend to be less involved in their home communities, since they are out of the community half the time and the activities often do not fit their shift schedule. In general, it seems that women are the ones who are mainly involved in their communities. However, due to the lack of resources in these home communities, support services are sometimes unreliable and inaccessible; women thus have to be more involved in their households and limit their involvement outside the home.



« Ok, fait qu'on est perdant sur toute la ligne, puis de plus en plus on le constate là. T'sais le bénévolat, t'sais à Sept-Îles ça avait été fort fort fort. Bien, c'est pas en chute libre là, mais il y en a moins, puis l'implication sur les CA, ça c'est la même chose. T'sais on le constate à ce niveau-là là. Fait que ça c'est de valeur, parce que pour faire fonctionner des organismes, des organismes communautaires entre autres... »
(représentant municipal, Sept-Îles).

Finally, many women living on the Lower North Shore pointed to the lack of social activities for adults, especially in the summer, when a high proportion of men leave the community for the season. Because they must take on a large share of the tasks traditionally reserved for men, some of them worry when they think about the possibility of a disaster, like a fire for example. They sometimes fear for their safety as well as the community's.

« It's not a joke, it's not funny, but sometimes it's like oh, a construction weekend, there's no men left in town. And we always say 'what if there's a fire? What if there's anything?' It's just women here certain times of the year. Just women »
(Wife, La Tabatière).

HOST COMMUNITIES (NEAR THE WORK SITE)

Demographically, communities that host commuters tend to see a decline or stabilization of their year-round population. The demographics of more economically diverse towns like Sept-Îles and Havre-Saint-Pierre appear more stable than those of single-industry towns like Fermont and Schefferville, whose population is shrinking. This demographic decline may be linked to a "fly-over effect" in these host communities, as they get little benefit in terms of economic development, employment, and training opportunities.



Table 2. Population between 2001 and 2016 in different towns on the North Shore

	2001	2006	2011	2016	Change
Fermont	2918	2633	2874	2474	-15,2 %
Schefferville	240	202	213	155	-35,4 %
Matimekush	449	528	540	613	36,5 %
Havre-Saint-Pierre	3291	3150	3418	3460	5,1 %
Sept-îles	25392	25514	25686	25400	0,0 %
Forestville	3748	3543	3270	3081	-17,8 %
Blanc-Sablon	1201	1263	1118	1112	-7,4 %
Baie-Comeau	23079	22554	22113	21536	-6,7 %
North Shore	97766	95911	94766	92518	-5,4 %

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Population, 2001-2016.

Because commuters consume little in the communities where they work, the economic benefits for nearby communities are minor. In some municipalities, this limited benefit is exacerbated by the location of work camps outside the community. Nevertheless, especially during mining booms, the commuters' presence still puts pressure on the availability of certain consumer goods and housing, at times leading to some shortages and a higher cost of living.

« Eux autres, à la Romaine, quand ils repartent chez eux, c'est là qu'ils dépensent leur argent, ce n'est pas au Havre. Tout a augmenté, mais eux, ils ne voient pas ça, ils ne dépensent pas ici. C'est nous qui payons en bout de ligne »
(Resident, Havre-Saint-Pierre).

In terms of employment, Havre-Saint-Pierre and Schefferville residents mainly feel that mining and hydroelectric companies tend to offer local people fewer opportunities and that outside workers are prioritized. This situation then contributes to more commuting in these communities.

« Le monde [du Havre] vont envoyer des CV pis ils ne se font pas rappeler. [...] Par contre, si quelqu'un de l'Abitibi ou du Nouveau-Brunswick envoie son CV, demain matin il a une job. Le monde de la place ici, il ne travaille pas »
(résidente, Havre-Saint-Pierre).

Residents also often mentioned lack of contact with commuters and therefore the impossibility for the latter to develop a sense of belonging with the host community. This lack of contact seems to lead in some cases to mistrust or even hostility toward the commuters.

« *Tout ce qu'ils veulent [les non-résidents] c'est de s'en aller, puis ils arrivent comme de reculons là. Ils arrivent faire leur 14, puis je ne les vois jamais de bonne humeur* »

(résident, Fermont).

In addition to incurring a social cost, it appears that commuters use the health care services of the host communities, especially because they find them faster or more convenient. This use thus puts pressure on the local health care system. According to the people interviewed government funding does not take this additional pressure into account. Similarly, the increase in the transient sub-population exerts additional pressure on some of the infrastructure in host communities, such as roads and airports, without the municipalities receiving appropriate funding for their maintenance. Aside from the issue of funding, it appears that regional planning is more difficult for municipalities, since the mining companies' hiring strategies and the number of commuters are continually changing. These municipalities thus have more trouble maintaining services and infrastructure adequately to satisfy all residents.

« Il y a un gros va-et-vient, donc on salit la ville, on brise la ville, on dérange la ville, sans aucune retombée économique que ce soit. [...] Au niveau des infrastructures, c'est que là vu que j'ai beaucoup de camions, beaucoup d'autobus, beaucoup de circulation qui est accrue, bien l'été c'est des poussières. On essaie depuis plusieurs années de s'entendre avec Tata Steel, mais ici la terre est rouge dû au fer, donc ça colle sur les véhicules, il pleut 4 jours sur 7, donc quand les véhicules arrivent, l'eau rouge coule sur l'asphalte, les gens rentrent à l'aéroport ou à l'épicerie avec les bottes rouges, c'est un gros problème. [...] Fait que c'est un peu l'impact direct de leur présence, puis ça c'est des coûts de réparation, nettoyage et autre que la ville doit assumer »

(administrateur, Schefferville).

Finally, since Havre-Saint-Pierre and Sept-Îles are both home and host communities, they face special challenges. Since many residents leave the community while commuters arrive from other communities, involvement and support networks seem even more difficult to maintain than elsewhere. In addition, these communities appear to experience a double social divide: between commuters and non-commuters and between residents and outsiders.



METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Finally, we would like to point out that the results presented above are based on a sample of participants; these people are therefore not necessarily representative of all residents and workers in the communities visited. The study is nevertheless relevant, since it reflects realities that, although not necessarily shared by all, exist for some individuals.

Various limitations also prevented researchers from meeting some specific groups (workers, wives, municipal councillors, social or community service representatives) in the communities under study. There were also specific events that likely influenced how respondents perceived commuting or the topics they were willing to discuss with the research team. For example, during the visit to the

Innu nation of Matimekush-Lac-John, the Band Council was experiencing a conflict with Tata Steel Mining. Also, at the time of the study, Havre-Saint-Pierre residents had just seen an increase in their municipal taxes. These incidents thus affected the participants' comments and limited the number of stakeholders who were met in the community.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Table 3 summarizes the main impacts of FIFO on home and host communities according to the respondents interviewed. It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and includes contradictory elements, since not all respondents had the same point of view on commuting. In addition, when no or few municipal councillors were met, fewer community impacts were mentioned, and they were more personal in nature.



Table 3. Main community impacts caused by commuting as experienced by respondents

		Main impacts
HOME COMMUNITIES	Impacts on the family	<p>Increase in income and purchasing power of some families (Sacré-Cœur, Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p> <p>Retention of families in the region (Sacré-Cœur, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Lower North Shore)</p> <p>Out-migration of families from the region (Lower North Shore)</p> <p>Risk of economic dependency for some women (Sacré-Cœur, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Lower North Shore)</p>
	Social and community impacts	<p>Changes in community involvement (Sacré-Cœur, Sept-Îles, Lower North Shore, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p> <p>Increase in inequalities and in social exclusion (Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p> <p>Seasonal demographic decline (Lower North Shore)</p> <p>Fewer services and activities (Lower North Shore)</p>
	Economic impacts	<p>Economic development of the community (Sept-Îles)</p> <p>Slower regional economic development (Lower North Shore)</p> <p>Development of training programs for mining employment (Sept-Îles)</p> <p>Labour shortage (Sept-Îles)</p> <p>New work opportunities for neighbouring First Nation communities (Sept-Îles)</p>
HOST COMMUNITIES	Social impacts	<p>Demographic decline (Fermont, Schefferville)</p> <p>Rising cost of consumer goods and housing (Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Schefferville)</p> <p>Increase in inequalities and in social exclusion (Sept-Îles, Fermont, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p> <p>Decrease in social cohesion (Fermont, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Schefferville)</p> <p>Feelings of insecurity in the community (Sept-Îles, Schefferville)</p> <p>Increase in drug traffic and prostitution (Sept-Îles)</p> <p>Changes in community involvement (Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p>
	Economic impacts	<p>Increase in royalties and mining taxes (Fermont)</p> <p>No taxes or mining royalties for the community (Schefferville)</p> <p>Few local economic benefits (Sept-Îles, Fermont, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Schefferville)</p> <p>Significant fluctuations in the real estate market during booms (Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p> <p>Increased tourism (Sept-Îles, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p> <p>Labour shortage (Fermont)</p>
	Impacts on governance	<p>Increased pressure on community services, infrastructure, and organizations (Sept-Îles, Fermont, Havre-Saint-Pierre, Schefferville)</p> <p>More difficulty in regional planning (Sept-Îles, Fermont, Havre-Saint-Pierre)</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to the discussions raised by the presentation of the preliminary report in Sept-Îles (February 2019), the research team stresses the importance of thinking about the appropriateness of long-distance commuting, its legal and social framework, and the restrictions to be imposed on it. Thus, the following recommendations do not necessarily aim either to increase commuting or to hinder employment of a workforce partially composed of commuters. The aim is to ensure the sustainability of home and host communities. This sustainability, as demonstrated by the Department of State Development in the case of the State of Queensland (2015), may sometimes require regulation of commuting arrangements.

IN THE WORKPLACE

The main finding of the study is that a significant proportion of workers experience some fatigue after their work period. In addition, it is often impossible for them to return home to assist their family or friends during difficult or important events. Finally, it seems that workers have little access to recreation in their work environment. In some cases, there are ongoing tensions between commuters and residents. When commuting is necessary, the research team offers the following suggestions:

Encourage within the company, for workers who already commute, 7/7 or 14/14 shift schedules, i.e., schedules that allow workers to leave and return always on the same day of the week and that allow them to return to the home community fairly often;

Encourage flexible arrangements that allow workers to leave the workplace without penalty or to take rest periods if something unexpected happens at home;

Promote social activities in the workplace between commuters and host community residents.

FOR THE WIVES AND FAMILIES

It seems that one of the main challenges that a commuter's wife and family faces is stress, anxiety, and even loneliness, particularly because of the magnitude of the tasks to be done during the husband's absence. In some communities, the activities and services available to women are very limited. The research team offers the following suggestions:

Implement and adequately support networking services to break the isolation of wives;

Set up and adequately support assistance services (daycare, home repair services, community kitchen) to help wives when they are alone and to enable them to continue working;

Provide family-oriented psychosocial services;

Adapt schedules for services and recreational activities, particularly by ensuring that some of them remain available even when part of the community leaves for seasonal work, and by ensuring that commuters' wives can participate.

FOR THE HOME COMMUNITIES AND THE HOST COMMUNITIES

The participants in home communities mainly mentioned that local employers have trouble finding skilled workers; without such a workforce the region cannot diversify and develop. In addition, the schedules of commuters and other residents sometimes seem difficult to reconcile, and this problem complicates organization of activities and services. It should be noted that the following recommendations apply both to home communities and to host communities, especially when a single community plays both roles. The research team offers the following suggestions:

Develop, in the community, services to help businesses and community organizations hire and retain workers;

Encourage economic diversification, particularly in single-industry towns and communities on the Lower North Shore;

Develop community assistance services when major development projects are taking place;

Create a guide of good practices for major development projects;

Develop a land occupancy strategy with different local, regional, national, governmental, and community stakeholders;

Inform students about the different positive and negative impacts of FIFO on both the individuals who practise it and on the communities that have to deal with it.



FOR HOST COMMUNITIES SPECIFICALLY

Because of a fly-over effect, host communities do not benefit much economically from the commuters' presence. In addition, especially during mining booms, the influx of workers from elsewhere causes tensions between them and the residents and complicates the planning and maintenance of services and infrastructure. To ensure the sustainability of these communities, the research team offers the following suggestions:

Locate commuters closer to the town and avoid housing them all in the same place in order that they may buy more local goods and develop a more meaningful connection to the host community;

Offer commuters integration services in the host community, either opportunities for community involvement or activities that would enable residents and non-residents to forge links with each other;

Develop, when possible, mechanisms, in cooperation with mining companies and their subcontractors, to retain local labour and encourage commuters to settle in the community;

Establish and increase availability of training and career development programs for mining employment;

Develop cooperatives to relieve some of the pressure on municipalities. In this respect, housing cooperatives would protect residents from real estate market fluctuations caused by mining booms;

Review regulations with an eye to making landlords sign one-year leases in order to limit arbitrary expulsion of women to make room for commuters;

Review regulations so that promoters and their subcontractors prioritize recruitment of employees from nearby communities before recruiting farther afield. When equally competent, the candidacy of a resident should be given priority over that of an outside worker;

Take into account the negative externalities experienced by host communities, by ensuring, among other things, adequate funding for infrastructure maintenance and for health care and social services provided to commuters.

TO GAIN MORE INSIGHT INTO THE SUBJECT

Since this research is one of the first to study the impacts of long-distance commuting in the province of Quebec and since it has many limitations, further studies would obviously enable us to refine some of the points covered in this report. The research team offers the following suggestions:

Conduct additional research in other regions of Quebec;

Quantify commuting and its impacts: number of people, costs and economic benefits, etc.;

Conduct research to identify the differences between stages of mining development, between different types of resource development projects, and between workers in construction and those in other industries;

Conduct research on the different types of commuters and their career paths;

Conduct research on the issues at stake in land occupancy on the North Shore.

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