

Working 'away': Community & Family Impacts of Long Distance Labour Commuting in Mackenzie, BC

Final Report

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Availability

Copies of this final report have been provided to the Mackenzie Public Library and the District of Mackenzie. Copies of the final report have also been provided to all focus group participants.

Copies have also been posted on UNBC's Community Development Institute website: www.unbc.ca/cdi/research.

Contact Information

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Working ‘Away’: Community and Family Impacts of Long Distance Labour Commuting in Mackenzie, BC

1.0 Project Description

The town of Mackenzie is one of BC’s ‘instant towns’, built in the late 1960s to house the workforce for a new regional forest industry. A significant economic downturn in Mackenzie beginning in early 2008 resulted in the closure of all major forest industry operations (sawmills and pulp and paper mills) in the community. As a result, some of these forest sector workers had to engage in long distance labour commuting (LDLC). For many, this was their first experience with LDLC practices. This project provided an opportunity to explore the implications of LDLC at both an individual and community level.

This project has three objectives. The first objective is to assess the scope and scale of the issues and implication of LDLC for families, with a specific focus on the workers who undertake LDLC and the family members who remain in the community and who only see the commuting member on an occasional basis. The second objective is to explore the scope and scale of the issues and implications for local communities of LDLC, with a specific focus on local civil society, the local business community, and local governance. The final objective is to link the findings of these family and community impacts to the wider discussion on resource town transition and LDLC and economic restructuring in Canada’s natural resources sector.

2.0 Methodology

The data and information for this project was collected through focus groups. Focus groups are useful to identify a wide range of important topics associated with LDLC that can be used to inform future work about this issue. Focus groups can facilitate interaction and dialogue amongst local stakeholders about important issues that can lead to an enhanced understanding of local perspectives, capacities, challenges, and opportunities.

Selecting Focus Group Participants

Focus groups were conducted on September 13th, 2011. The purpose was to study the impacts of LDLC on many facets of family and community life in Mackenzie, BC. Focus group participants were drawn from publicly available lists of community groups, churches, service provision agencies, the business community, and local government. A total of twenty-five residents participated in four focus groups held throughout the day.

A general breakdown of focus group participants by community sector is shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1: Focus group participants

Sector	Number of Participants	% of Participants
Churches	1	4.0
Health care	1	4.0
Business community	3	12.0
Education	7	28.0
Service providers	4	16.0
Local government	4	16.0
Provincial government	1	4.0
General residents	1	4.0
Recreation	2	8.0
Industry	1	4.0
Total	25	100.0

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Research Ethics

Research conducted by the Community Development Institute is bound by protocols at the University of Northern British Columbia that requires all survey or interview guides be submitted to UNBC's Research Ethics Board for review. A key component to this protocol is to provide research participants with a copy of the consent form (Appendix B) that outlines the purpose of the study, how the research process will protect their anonymity and confidentiality, and that their participation is voluntary.

Focus Group Questions

The purpose of this study was to identify general concerns and issues about the impacts of LDLC on families and the collective community. This report assembles a summary of key themes from the focus groups. A detailed description of questions asked in each section is provided in Appendix B. In general, participants were asked questions in the following areas:

- experience with LDLC,
- benefits of LDLC,
- concerns with LDLC,
- services that respond to LDLC needs, and
- impacts of LDLC on local quality-of-life.

Analysis

During each focus group, comments were taped and recorded. A summary file was created for each focus group session that was sent to participants for review where they had the opportunity to make any necessary changes. After a final summary file was

created for each focus group session, qualitative analysis was done to identify, code, and categorize patterns and themes from the data.

3.0 Results

This part of the report describes the key themes running through each section of the focus group questions. Detailed tables of participants' responses are found in Appendix A.

Experience

In this section, participants were asked about their experience with LDLC. First, there were participants who had general experience with LDLC – either personally or through family, friends, and colleagues (Table A1). There were also participants who had no direct experience with LDLC. Instead, some participants' exposure to the impacts of LDLC was through experience in providing services and supports to workers and their families. Some of these service workers talked about how LDLC had increased the demand for services, such as mental health, recreation, or lunch programs. Others talked about how programs were adjusted to meet the needs of LDLC workers and their families.

Benefits

When asked to identify any benefits associated with LDLC, the stronger themes included financial benefits for households and the local economy, increased cooperation and volunteering for events and support, and the retention of residents in Mackenzie (Table B1). In this context, an important nuance stems from how time constraints have changed certain facets of community life. For example, some participants noted that residents no longer had time to commute to regional centres, and, therefore, were more likely to support local businesses and spend more time with their family. Another important theme concerned new opportunities that emerged to build local capacity through education and training, employment programs, or the influx of new ideas / advice from LDLC workers who returned to the community.

Concerns

Participants were also asked to discuss any concerns associated with LDLC. The biggest concerns were about household stress, including the impacts that LDLC had on workers, youth, and social relationships with spouses and friends (Table C1). Notably, there was considerable stress and extra responsibilities for the remaining spouse in Mackenzie to maintain the household. There was the potential for burnout for the spouse who remained in the community, as well as for the LDLC worker who experienced 'intense periods of work' and 'intense periods of time at home' to catch up with family and attend to household repairs. At the same time, LDLC workers experienced loneliness and disconnection from both their family and community. The travel and lifestyle associated with LDLC also affected workers' health. With limited

access to a commuting parent, and with fewer role models in the community, participants were concerned about increased anxiety and behavioural problems in some youth. Social relationships with friends and other families were also difficult to maintain with conflicting LDLC shift schedules.

LDLC produced considerable time constraints on households, which spilled over into other facets of community life such as declining membership and volunteering with community groups or more limited participation with recreation groups and community events. In some cases, LDLC workers were no longer available to provide volunteer support for critical services such as fire fighting and search and rescue, as well as offer support for school programs and activities. This has affected the ability of groups to deliver a range of activities, and has even produced competition amongst local groups to attract and mobilize volunteers.

Furthermore, concerns were expressed about the impact that LDLC was having on the financial well-being of both households and the local economy. First, concerns were expressed about the costs associated with maintaining two households. LDLC also impacted the operations of local businesses. As LDLC workers have access to shopping in other places, some felt that LDLC has led to business uncertainty and closures. At the same time, business owners find it difficult to schedule local workers if their spouse is engaged in LDLC. In some cases, there is extra stress and workloads for fewer staff.

Services

Participants who attended the meetings were asked about the availability of services to support residents impacted by LDLC. When asked if services met the needs of those affected by LDLC, participants were clearly proud of the efforts made by local organizations under difficult circumstances (Table D1). In particular, participants highlighted the role of food and nutrition programs. With LDLC, the costs of maintaining two households and increasing time constraints impacted the ability of some households to meet these needs. Parents did not always have time to make lunches. In response, Care and Share and St. Peter's Pantry have been providing hampers. New partnerships were also formed to address these needs. Morfee Elementary has partnered with the College of New Caledonia to deliver hot lunch programs, which have been extended into the summer. The Recreation Centre and Mackenzie Counselling also partnered to deliver a summer lunch program. Through bake sales and donations, citizens, service clubs, and businesses have also been supporting food and nutrition programs.

Following the mill closures, local and regional service agencies delivered and enhanced employment supports to bridge employment and connect workers with LDLC opportunities. Key efforts included the local government's delivery of a job opportunities program, job fairs, expanded Service Canada staff, expanding the employment centre, and more media promotion of opportunities.

Participants also highlighted the important ability of key service groups to maintain or increase support for LDLC workers and their families during the period of transition. In terms of community services, Mackenzie Counselling expanded staff and delivered specialized programs for spouses who remained in town. The College of New Caledonia expanded education programs to prepare residents for LDLC opportunities. Many participants emphasized the importance of affordable recreation programs and activities offered through the Recreation Centre. These programs were also adjusted to meet the needs of LDLC families and to provide opportunities for social interaction and support across families.

When participants were asked to identify any additional services to support the needs created by LDLC, four key items were highlighted (Table D2). First, there is a need to expand business supports in order to provide timely advice and on-going mentoring for new or young entrepreneurs. In terms of health care, more mobile units and outreach programs are needed. Parents who remain in Mackenzie with multiple children and multiple commitments for those children are not simply able to commute to regional centres, especially those families who are restricted by the inconvenient schedule offered through inter-community bus service. More attention is needed to address transportation to regional centres. Furthermore, more programs are needed to support volunteering with community groups in order to maintain programs.

An important part of community planning is to determine gaps that impact the recruitment and retention of residents. When participants were asked to identify what was needed to keep workers and their families in Mackenzie, the most prominent needs to be addressed included education and health care services (Table D3). Routine access to a breadth of high school courses, upgrading programs, supports to develop successful students, and retraining programs for self-employed individuals were key concerns that needed to be addressed to strengthen local educational opportunities. In terms of health care, more doctors and more resources are needed to reduce turnover of health care professionals. A breadth of business gaps were also identified, including the need for a men's clothing store, a women's clothing store, and another gas station. From a community marketing perspective, some highlighted the need for a Tim Horton's. The business community would also be strengthened by the deployment of a comprehensive shop local program. Housing needs included expanding / upgrading the existing housing stock and developing more low-income housing in mixed residential areas.

When participants were asked about specific business attraction and retention strategies in the community, people talked about the role played by the Chamber of Commerce to provide relocation packages, information, and re-establish the Welcome Wagon (Table D4). Others noted that the economic development officer at the District of Mackenzie and the Rotary Club have also played a role to provide information and connections to perspective business operators. In addition to meetings that the local government coordinated with Conifex, local forestry workers kept the mill operational and local staff from the Ministry of Forests worked to secure a fibre supply to support the sale of the mill.

Finally, participants were asked to identify any services offered to new residents (Table D5). Again, participants highlighted the promotion of relocation packages through the Chamber of Commerce and real estate agents, as well as initiatives under way to redevelop the Welcome Wagon program. Specific employers, such as Canfor and the Northern Health Authority, have provided signing bonuses to new employees. Participants also highlighted initiatives being undertaken by local government, recreation groups, and service providers to promote community assets and supports to perspective residents.

Quality of Life

In the final section, participants were asked to discuss the impacts that LDLC has had on the quality of life (Table E1). Several positive impacts were acknowledged, including opportunities to pursue new initiatives and working relationships, to obtain job fulfillment, and to pursue new opportunities in trades. On the other hand, LDLC has had several negative consequences for family and community life. On a household level, such impacts include disrupted family and social relationships. On a community level, families have less time and resources to engage in community organizations and activities. In some cases, this has affected the stability and quality of programs that are able to be delivered to residents.

Finally, participants were asked if the community has adequate facilities for recreation, arts, and culture that enhance the quality of life in Mackenzie (Table E2). From a positive perspective, people emphasized the availability of affordable programs and range of amenities. However, participants also highlighted gaps for recreation, arts, and culture. In terms of recreation, there were calls for an indoor walking track and more indoor activities. Recommendations to strengthen the arts included the development of a movie theatre and more arts activities. Finally, people suggested that social and cultural infrastructure could be enhanced by strengthening accessibility to all community amenities, and by developing a community centre, a multi-purpose facility, a catering kitchen, and more social activities.

4.0 Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to highlight some of the core themes that came out of the focus group meetings held in Mackenzie to discuss the impacts of LDLC on various facets of community life. The appendices to this report contain the detailed tables that describe the range of responses to each question. These themes, together with the nuances captured in the appendices, can form the basis for planning programs, policies, and infrastructure investments. Although our work focused on the impacts of LDLC on the many facets of life in Mackenzie, there are a number of issues that fall outside of local jurisdiction. As such, some topics may simply become advocacy issues for the District of Mackenzie and other local leaders to raise with other levels of government. Others are clearly available for local action. Below, we have highlighted some possible areas for local action:

Planning needs – There is a need to develop new housing facilities that will meet the needs of an aging population, low-income residents, and new workers and their families.

Business needs – There is a need to connect businesses with a broader support environment where they can access advice and expertise. This should include the development of initiatives for succession planning and mentorship.

Physical environment needs – There is a need to continue to strengthen community infrastructure by working with businesses, service providers, and community groups to enhance the accessibility of various amenities and buildings.

Information needs – There is an opportunity to build upon existing relocation packages and develop a proactive, comprehensive, and coordinated approach to recruit and retain businesses and residents. While efforts are already under way to redevelop a Welcome Wagon for residents, there may be an opportunity to pursue new working relationships or revisit former connections with groups, such as the post office, to provide information and services to new residents.

Service needs – There is a need to lobby for more resources and personnel who can provide services and outreach supports within the community. These needs are particularly important given the time and logistical constraints facing families with multiple children. Building upon the considerable strengths and resourcefulness of existing educational groups, there is also a need to lobby for more resources to support life-long learning, and to ensure that families can meet the educational needs of their children within the community. Assistance with home repairs and maintenance can also help to alleviate household pressures. There is also an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of local groups by developing programs to support volunteering.

Social/recreation needs – The community has been very proactive in developing and maintaining affordable recreational programs. These efforts can be extended to new amenities to address recreational, social, and cultural needs.

Transportation needs – There is a need to explore synergies with businesses and service agencies that can expand options to address both local and regional transportation needs.

Appendix A

Data from Meetings

Each table consists of theme headings and sub-headings. The theme headings are bolded and have a numerical count beside them of the total number of comments received for that particular topic. Under each theme are sub-headings that are in plain, non-bolded font. These cover the range of issues captured under a key theme. Beside each sub-heading is a numerical count of the total number of meetings that raised a specific issue.

For example, in Table C3, participants were asked about concerns associated with LDLC. The most prominent theme was household stress. For example, while two out of four meetings talked about how long distance workers have limited time to complete household repairs, one of the meetings had participants that felt there has been an increase in family break ups. When all of the sub-heading comments are added up, the theme of household stress was raised twenty times.

Section A: Experience

Table A1: Experience with long distance labour commuting

General Experience (15)

Providing services to LDLC workers/families (4)

Spouse commutes (4)

Personal experience with commuting (3)

Friends/colleagues commute (2)

Other family member commutes (1)

No personal experience (1)

Changes in Services (5)

Increased mental health supports (1)

Increased demand for school lunch program (1)

More lone parents using services (1)

Programs adjusted to meet LDLC family needs (1)

Recreation programs developed to bring LDLC families together for support (1)

Different Types of Commuting (4)

Both men and women engage in LDLC (1)

Commuting to Mackenzie (1)

Few international commuters (1)

LDLC is not new (i.e. logging industry) (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Section B: Benefits

Table B1: Benefits of long distance labour commuting

Financial Benefits/Economy (9)

Income benefits (2)
Residents supported local businesses more (2)
EDO tried to diversify/create economic opportunities (1)
Mackenzie's debt free status enabled them to offer affordable activities (1)
More attention paid to financial management/budgeting (1)
Obtained higher paying jobs (1)
Provided opportunity for businesses to reinvent themselves (1)

Cooperation and Volunteering (6)

Hockeyville pulled people together (2)
2009 Winter Games pulled people together (1)
Community rallied to keep services/activities (1)
Increased support from new volunteers (1)
People took pride in lending support (1)

Retention of Residents (6)

Enables families to stay in Mackenzie (3)
Able to avoid mass exodus (1)
Able to avoid uprooting family (1)
Able to maintain established roots (1)

Education and Training (3)

CNC got funding for transition programs (1)
More awareness of importance of education (1)
People upgraded/pursued trades training for LDLC (1)

Local Capacity Building (3)

LDLC workers returned with new ideas (1)
LDLC workers returned with advice about shift schedules for new mill/mining operations (1)
Youth jobs contributed to household (1)

Cost of Living (2)

Affordable housing in Mackenzie (1)
Low cost of living retained residents (1)

Employment Programs (2)

Local government delivered job programs (1)
Job programs enhanced local trails/community garden (1)

Safety (2)

Low crime rate (1)
People have no money for drugs (1)

Social Relationships (2)

New social relationships were formed (1)
Parents got together for support (1)

Family (1)

More time spent with family (1)

Housing (1)

Supported housing investments (1)

Recreation (1)

Special events well attended (1)

Other (3)

Appreciation for what you have (2)
No benefits (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Section C: Concerns

Table C1: Concerns with long distance labour commuting

Household Stress (20)

Uneven sharing of parent responsibilities (3)
Disruption of household routines (2)
LDLC worker feels like a stranger (2)
Limited home time consumed by repairs (2)
Spouse in Mackenzie has increased anxiety (2)
Forced separation (1)
LDLC worker role as “nice guy” at home (1)
Limited interaction between worker & family (1)
No break for LDLC worker when home (1)
Parent burnout (1)
More family breakups (1)
More family violence (1)
Limited ability for family members to support each other emotionally (1)
Rise of functional lone parent households (1)

Financial Stress/Economy (24)

Business closures (2)
Businesses can't afford staff (2)
Must maintain two households (2)
Stores can only offer basic commodities (2)
Businesses not supporting each other (1)
Business uncertainty (1)
Closure of gas stations (1)
Decreased sales (1)
Difficult to schedule local workers if spouse is engaged in LDLC (1)
Dwellings returned to bank (1)
Extra stress/duties operating with fewer staff (1)
Fewer people employed in services (1)
Lack of support for businesses (1)
LDLC workers shop in other places (1)
Less money for family participation in programs/activities (1)
New businesses could not last (1)
People lack money for restaurants (1)
Stores cannot stock shelves as well (1)
Stores have difficulty paying their rent (1)
Young households with mortgages more affected by financial stress (1)

Impacts on Recreation Groups (18)

Less participation in curling club (3)
LDLC workers could no longer coach teams (2)
Cuts to adult sports/activities (1)
Dart league has fewer members (1)
Fewer adult programs (1)
Fewer could afford recreation programs (1)

Impacts on Recreation Groups Cont'd

Fewer men participate in sports leagues (1)
Fewer people use Recreation Centre (1)
Hockey league has fewer members (1)
Less time to participate in sports/activities (1)
Less participation in minor hockey (1)
Less time to drive kids to activities (1)
Less time for camping (1)
Less time for fishing (1)
Senior men's hockey team disbanded (1)

Membership and Volunteering with Community Groups (17)

Legion has fewer members (2)
Arts Council has fewer members (1)
Community groups lack members to deliver activities (1)
Decline in group memberships (1)
Fewer volunteers for Performing Arts (1)
Increased competition to attract volunteers (1)
Kinsmen sold the Kin Hut building (1)
LDLC workers no longer volunteer on fire department (1)
Less help available for school programs (1)
Lions Club has fewer members (1)
Masons have fewer members (1)
More time constraints on family members (1)
Parents have less time to volunteer (1)
Same people volunteer (1)
Search and Rescue has fewer volunteers (1)
Volunteering capacity leaves community with LDLC (1)

Impacts on Workers (13)

Isolation/loneliness (3)
Burnout (1)
Decline in healthy lifestyles/activities (1)
Disconnected from family (1)
Do not fit into home/work community (1)
Increased depression (1)
Increased drinking (1)
Lack of sleep causes health/safety concerns (1)
No yard to work/play in while away (1)
Perception of nomadic lifestyle (1)
Poor diet/eating habits (1)

Impacts on Youth (8)

Fathers not available for activities/guidance (2)
Increased anxiety in kids (1)
Long distance from grandma and grandpa (1)
No/few male role models in the community (1)
No routine access to a parent (1)
Youth less disciplined for bad behavior (1)
Youth struggle with forced separation (1)

Social Relationships (8)

Difficult to connect with long-term friends (1)
Fewer gatherings (1)
Loss of friendships (1)
Lots of grieving (1)
Must coordinate LDLC shift schedules with social activities between families (1)
Sense of abandonment (1)
Social fabric change (1)
Social interaction declined (1)

Community Events (3)

Decline of Morfee Mountain Music Festival (1)
Lack of funding for community events (1)
Low participation/attendance at events (1)

Education and Training (3)

New LDLC jobs require high school (1)
Fewer high school courses/electives (1)
Older workers lack education for LDLC jobs (1)

Changes in Services/Supports (2)

Closure of Mackenzie Elementary School (1)
Increased demand for school counselor (1)

Communication (2)

Misinformation (1)
Overwhelmed parents more susceptible to fears/rumours (1)

Safety (2)

More traffic/danger for LDLC workers (1)
Long distances for commutes pose danger for road accidents (1)

Local Governance (1)

Uncertain tax base (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Section D: Services

Table D1: Do services currently meet the needs of those affected by long distance labour commuting?

Food/Nutrition Programs (15)

Care and Share (2)
Catholic Church started St. Peter's Pantry (2)
Elementary school / CNC partnership deliver hot lunch program (2)
Bake sales to support food programs (1)
Banks supported meal programs (1)
Citizens bought extra food to donate (1)
Co-op offered brand products at basic prices (1)
Donations received for Thanksgiving dinner (1)
Donations shared amongst local food groups (1)
Lunch/breakfast programs at elementary school extended into summer (1)
Recreation Centre/Mackenzie Counselling delivered summer lunch program (1)
Schools solicited donations to feed children (1)

Employment (11)

Municipal government coordinated workers funded by job opportunities program (4)
Service Canada increased local staff (2)
CNC proposal for new employment program (1)
Companies held job fairs (1)
Employment centre expanded (1)
Fire guards constructed through job opportunities program (1)
Increased awareness of opportunities through radio/newspaper ads (1)

Community Services (6)

Mackenzie Counselling hired more staff (2)
Mackenzie Counselling specialized programs for spouses (2)
Mackenzie Counselling increased outreach programs (1)
Social services offered more support for residents (1)

Education (6)

CNC offered courses for LDLC workers (1)
CNC offered courses for the mining industry (1)
CNC offered more training programs (1)
CNC was responsive to local needs (i.e. machinest programs, welding, cooking, etc.) (1)
Good coordination between CNC and MECC (1)
Registration in CNC programs increased (1)

Recreation (5)

Recreation Centre offered affordable rates for programs (2)
Recreation Centre offered free activities (2)
Recreation Centre obtained grants to deliver programs/gift certificates to residents (1)

Real Estate (2)

Bankers/real estate groups searched for solutions to help people keep their homes (1)
Mall owner worked with/was flexible with tenants (1)

General (1)

Community services maintained/increased during LDLC periods (1)

Health Care (1)

Hospital obtained more resources for mental health (1)

Safety (1)

Increase in policing (1)

Service Clubs (1)

Rotary received donations from other BC Rotary clubs (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Table D2: What additional services are needed to meet the needs created by long distance labour commuting?

Business Supports (4)

- Advice/support to help businesses through tough times (1)
- Business support needs to be expanded beyond banking services (1)
- Need a mentoring program for new business people/young entrepreneurs (1)
- Need to connect/market supports available to local business community (1)

Health Care (3)

- More mobile units for health care (1)
- More outreach supports for health care (1)
- Need a visiting team for families with special needs children (1)

Community Groups (1)

- More programs to support volunteering (1)

General (1)

- More resources to deliver on-going programs (1)

Nothing (1)

- Everything doable was done (1)

Transportation (1)

- Convenient transportation supports to access regional services (1)
-

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Table D3: What else do you think is needed in Mackenzie that would help to keep workers and their families?

Education (8)

- Explore option to deliver high school courses through CNC if not offered annually (1)
- High school courses need to be offered routinely (1)
- Need programs to support test writing skills (1)
- Need retraining programs for self-employed (1)
- Need safe driving programs (1)
- Need to re-open second elementary school (1)
- Need upgrading programs (1)
- Quality education will attract/retain families (1)

Health Care (6)

- Doctors needed (3)
- Dentists needed (1)
- Need to reduce rotation amongst doctors/nurse practitioners (1)
- Need more resources to acquire sufficient, long-term personnel (1)

Businesses (4)

- Initiate a shop local program (1)
- Need a men's clothing store (1)
- Need another gas station (1)
- Need a Tim Horton's (1)
- Need a women's clothing store (1)

Housing (2)

- Need affordable/low-income housing in mixed residential areas (1)
- Need new housing (1)

Community Development (1)

- Pursue more initiatives to make Mackenzie a destination (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Table D4: Does the community have any specific business attraction and retention program?

Chamber of Commerce has relocation packages (2)
Chamber of Commerce is re-establishing the Welcome Wagon (2)
Chamber of Commerce provides information and connections (1)
Economic development officer has been providing information/connections (1)
Local forestry workers continued to work hard to keep mill operational (1)
Local government held meetings with Conifex (1)
Local Ministry of Forests staff worked to secure fibre supply for sale of pulp mill (1)
Rotary provides connections (1)
Not sure (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Table D5: Does the community offer specific services for new residents?

Chamber of Commerce has relocation packages (2)
Chamber of Commerce is re-establishing the Welcome Wagon (2)
Post office used to offer packages for new residents (2)
Canfor is offering \$20,000 to cover relocation costs/signing bonus (1)
CNC expanded its apprenticeship programs (1)
Community is actively promoting its assets (1)
Cross country ski club offers affordable annual single/family memberships (1)
Human resource departments at mills offer newcomer services (1)
More programs are offered for seniors (1)
Northern Health Authority offers a signing bonus for new doctors (1)
Real estate agencies offer relocation packages (1)
Real estate agents offer help with moving, renovating, and getting settled (1)
Recreation Centre has kept rates low (1)

There is a lack of volunteers to support initiatives for new residents (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Section E: Quality of Life

Table E1: How do you think long distance labour commuting has impacted local quality of life?

Positive (5)

- Provides opportunities to provide support/pursue new initiatives (2)
- Activities maintained for children (1)
- LDLC offers job fulfillment (1)
- LDLC offers opportunities in some trades (1)

Negative (11)

- Less time available to participate in community activities/groups (4)
- Disrupted family life (1)
- Disrupted social relationships (1)
- Less money available to pay for participation in programs (1)
- Less time available for leisure/recreation (1)
- Less time available for quality family time (1)
- More stress for parent taking care of household in Mackenzie (1)
- Quality of activities is compromised (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Table E2: Does the community have adequate facilities for recreation, arts, culture – general amenities that enhance local quality of life?

Positive Attributes

- Affordable programs (1)
- District has adopted a longer-term planning approach (1)
- Good range of amenities (1)
- Good recreation centre (1)
- Swimming pool is a great asset (1)

Gaps

- Need a community centre (2)
- Need a catering kitchen (1)
- Need a movie theatre (1)
- Need a multi-purpose facility (1)
- Need an indoor walking track (1)
- Need a seniors' drop-in centre (1)
- Need more accessible amenities for seniors/disabled (1)
- Need more activities for seniors (1)
- Need more arts activities (1)
- Need more indoor activities (1)
- Need more information on demographic changes/needs (1)
- Need more social activities (1)

Source: LDLC Study, 2011.

Appendix B

Consent Form

Focus Group Question Guide

Working 'away': Community & family impacts of extended out-of-town work commuting Focus Group Consent Form

Purpose – A key change in Canada's northern resource towns has been the growth of long distance labour commuting (LDLC). Mackenzie was built in the late 1960s to house the workforce for a new regional forest industry. A significant economic downturn beginning in 2008 meant that many workers had to engage in LDLC. This project will examine the implications, experiences, and responses of this for workers, their families, community groups, and the local business community. The entire project will involve focus groups and interviews. This consent is only for the focus group activity.

How Respondents Were Chosen - The focus group participants were selected from organization lists and from local suggestions of people with an interest in, or experience with, long distance labour commuting. Focus group participants were selected for their potential to provide information that can help to better understand the impacts on workers, their families, and the community.

Anonymity and Confidentiality – The names of participants will not be used in any reporting, nor will any information which may be used to identify individuals. The nature of focus group discussions means that we will be sharing information amongst everyone present. However, all information shared in this focus group will be held within strict confidence by the researchers. The focus group will be audio recorded and a summary of key themes will be created. The key theme summary will be shared with you for edits or corrections. All records will be kept in a locked research room at UNBC and accessible only to the research team. The information will be kept until the final project report is complete. After this time, all material and information related to the focus group will be destroyed.

Potential Risks and Benefits - This project has been assessed by the UNBC Research Ethics Board. The project team does not consider there to be any risks to participation. We hope that by participating you will have a chance to provide input into issues relevant to long distance labour commuting and its impacts.

Voluntary Participation - Your participation in the focus group is entirely voluntary and, as such, you may chose not to participate. If you participate, you may choose not to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable, and you have the right to end your participation in the focus group at any time and have all the information you provided withdrawn from the study and destroyed.

Research Results - In case of any questions that may arise from this research, please feel free to contact Dr. Greg Halseth (250-960-5826; halseth@unbc.ca) in the Geography Program at UNBC. The final project report will be distributed to all focus group participants.

Complaints - Any complaints about this project should be directed to the Office of Research, UNBC (250) 960-6735 <reb@unbc.ca>.

I have read the above description of the study and I understand the conditions of my participation. My signature indicates that I agree to participate in this study.

(Name -please print)

(Signature)

(Date)

**Working 'away':
Community & family impacts of extended out-of-town work commuting
FOCUS GROUP GUIDE**

Focus group: _____

Facilitator: _____

Notes taken by: _____

Date: _____ Place: _____

Meeting Time: Start _____ Finish _____

TOPIC AREAS:

- Opening Questions
- Experience
- Benefits
- Concerns
- Services
- Quality of life
- Concluding Question

A. Opening Questions

Around the table, what is your name and how long have you lived in Mackenzie?

B. Experience

Around the table, can you briefly describe your experience with long distance labour commuting in Mackenzie?

C. Benefits

What do you think are some of the benefits or positive impacts of long distance labour commuting?

Prompts: For ...

Workers

Families

Community groups

Local businesses

Local government

D. Concerns

What do you think are some of the concerns or negative issues created by long distance labour commuting?

Prompts: For ...

Workers

Families

Community groups

Local businesses

Local government

E. Services

Do you think local services currently meet the needs of those affected by long distance labour commuting?

Prompts: For ...

Workers

Families

Community groups

Local businesses

Local government

What additional services do you think are needed to meet the needs created by long distance labour commuting?

What else do you think is needed in Mackenzie that would help to keep workers and their families in Mackenzie?

Does the community have any specific business attraction and retention program? Is there anything informal?

Does the community offer any services for new residents?

F. Quality of Life

In general, how do you think long distance labour commuting has impacted local quality of life?

Does the community have adequate facilities for recreation, arts, culture – general amenities that enhance the quality of life in Mackenzie?

G. Concluding Question

From the experiences you have had in the community, do you have anything else that has not been touched on here that you would like to comment on?