

Frequently Asked Questions

1. I want a camp job. Can you tell me which companies offer this?

This is a difficult question to answer because it depends on a number of things—the job position, the proximity to Fort McMurray, the contract with the oilsands company. Generally though, the major oilsands companies that are close to Fort McMurray do not provide camp housing for its direct employees (e.g. Syncrude, Suncor), unless they have a position that is extremely difficult to fill. The rooms are distributed to the contractors based on their workforce needs and the contract they sign. Sites further away, such as CNRL, provide camp housing, and/or fly-in fly-out contracts. But whether or not every employee gets camp housing is all dependant on the contract and/or their collective bargaining agreement (if they have one).

Whether or not a job comes with camp housing depends on the company and the job, so it's something that you have to negotiate with the employer.

2. I want to be a labourer, make lots of money, stay in a camp and I have no experience. Can you get me a job?

No, we can't give you a job or pass your résumé onto employers, but we can give you the names of the companies that hire in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB). We provide labour market information for employment in the area. Finding a job is a process and still takes time and hard work to make a good connection with an employer.

You must do your research. Jobs generally pay more in the RMWB than in other centres, but it may still not be enough to pay for housing. Housing is expensive and scarce and if you are thinking you will find a job immediately after you get here, you are mistaken. It takes time to get work here too. Contrary to popular belief, employers are not waiting at the airport recruiting.

The employers in the RMWB are looking for skilled and trained workers. There are generally not high-paid positions for unskilled labour.

3. I am from Ontario and I have been a welder (or pipefitter, or electrician, or carpenter...) for 20 years but I don't have a ticket. Can I get a job?

Generally, employers want skilled labour. They are looking for Alberta-certified ticketed journeymen and indentured apprentices or tradespeople with their Interprovincial Red Seal. If you have your journeyman ticket from another province than Alberta, you can take the Interprovincial Red Seal exam.

The major employers in the RMWB require these, and now many contractors are also asking for the same qualifications.

You can also apply for your Qualification Certificate Program through Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training.

4. I am having a hard time getting a job. Can I just come out there and get a job in Fort McMurray?

Yes, but it's not recommended. There is a lot of work available in the RMWB, but it is still a process. Even if the process of finding an employer you want to work for, getting an interview, and getting the job only take a couple of weeks, you still need a place to live. Housing is expensive and scarce and landlords require that you pay damage deposit (usually worth one month's rent) and first and last month's rent. According to a Fort McMurray survey taken in February 2008 on apartment rental rates, the average one-bedroom apartment is \$1,697 a month. It would cost you \$5,091 just to move into an apartment.

Most employers have websites and only accept résumés through their online process. You would be no further ahead if you went to Fort McMurray.

If you do decide to come before acquiring employment, do as much research as you can before you come and make sure you can afford to live here first. (Also, book a hotel or motel before you come. At some times of year ALL hotels/motels are booked up to a month in advance.)

5. What is housing like in Fort McMurray?

Housing is expensive and scarce. Do your research before you come.

6. Are there any employers who will fly me in and out of Fort McMurray?

Yes, but it's not generally advertised except for higher professional positions or skilled and ticketed tradespeople. If you are looking for a trades position, look at the contractors who work in the area. If you are looking for a professional position, look at the major oil sands employers. (Syncrude and Suncor want their employees to live in Fort McMurray, so some positions will not be offered as fly-in/fly-out.)

7. Will employers help me with my immigration needs?

That depends on the position you are applying for and the amount of training and skills you have and whether those skills need to be updated to meet Canadian standards. Employers in the RMWB look for workers in their community first, then in the rest of Alberta, then across Canada, then outside of Canada. Some employers have a hard time looking internationally because work experience and references are so hard to check.

If you are a professional and have a university degree, employers may be willing to help you with your immigration needs. If there is a Canadian or Alberta association for the field you are working in, contact them for more information (E.g. APEGGA – the Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta). Also, Alberta Employment and Immigration provides a service to determine a person's international qualifications, called International Qualification Assessment Service (IQAS). If you are a tradesperson, you will more likely be given a chance at employment in Canada by getting the Interprovincial Red Seal certification before applying.

Some employers travel to other countries to hold a recruiting campaign. If you are hired in this way, those employers will help you to come here. To find out about any recruiting campaigns, contact your country's government office that deals with employment. These campaigns are not advertised here, so we do not hear about them until after the workers are already in Canada.

Regardless of whether a company helps you come to Canada or not, you should check out the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website. This website has all of the information you might need.

8. Is it cold up there?

The average temperatures in Fort McMurray are -20° to 16.5° C (-4.4° to 61.7° F). Look at our About Wood Buffalo page for more information on Fort McMurray and the RMWB.

9. I want to move there with my family. Would my wife be able to find a job there too?

Yes, Fort McMurray is a thriving centre with all of the services and businesses that any large city has. For employer contacts for all areas of work, look at the Employer Websites and choose the category of work that suits your skills and interests. Also, look at the Resources section for additional information on career planning, community information, housing and business development.