

Planned changes to nanny program spark alarm ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Calgary immigration consultants are bracing for changes to the Live-In Caregiver Program (LCP) they warn will hurt working families at a time when child care is hard to find in the city.

It's believed the federal government plans to scale back the program. Employment Minister Jason Kenney told the National Post's editorial board Tuesday the program has "ran out of control," and would be reformed in the "fairly near future."

Though a review of the program was only made public this week, Calgary immigration lawyer Raj Sharma expects changes to come soon. "There is no doubt (the LCP) will be the next on the chopping block," he said. "I believe that the program will either be terminated, or that (caregivers) will lose their ability to apply for permanent residence."

Child-care shortage

Sauna Guth, director of placements and operations for caregiving agency Diamond Personnel, says changes to the program would disproportionately affect Calgarians.

Her company employs both Canadian and foreign nannies, and she said low unemployment and poor public transportation make it hard to find local caregivers. "Calgary is one of our highest demand markets across Canada," said Guth. She said the program is affordable and fills a labour-market gap, but added that processing times can be long, and employers are expected to take a risk in paying for flights and fees.

Roughly 20,000 workers are in Canada under the program at any given time, and 6,000 arrived in Canada in 2012. As part of its overhaul of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) last week, the government changed the LCP application fee from \$275 to \$1,000. Guth paints a dire picture if the program is scrapped.

"Some may hire undocumented workers, some may have no option but to leave their careers behind in order to care for their family," she said. "There are very few options available for rural families. Eldercare facilities are already experiencing wait lists."

Manuela Gruber Hersch, president of the Association of Caregiver and Nanny Agencies Canada, describes the changes as an "attack on double-income families. It's huge and it's quite shocking and I think a lot of families should be very concerned."

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- reprinted from the Calgary Herald

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