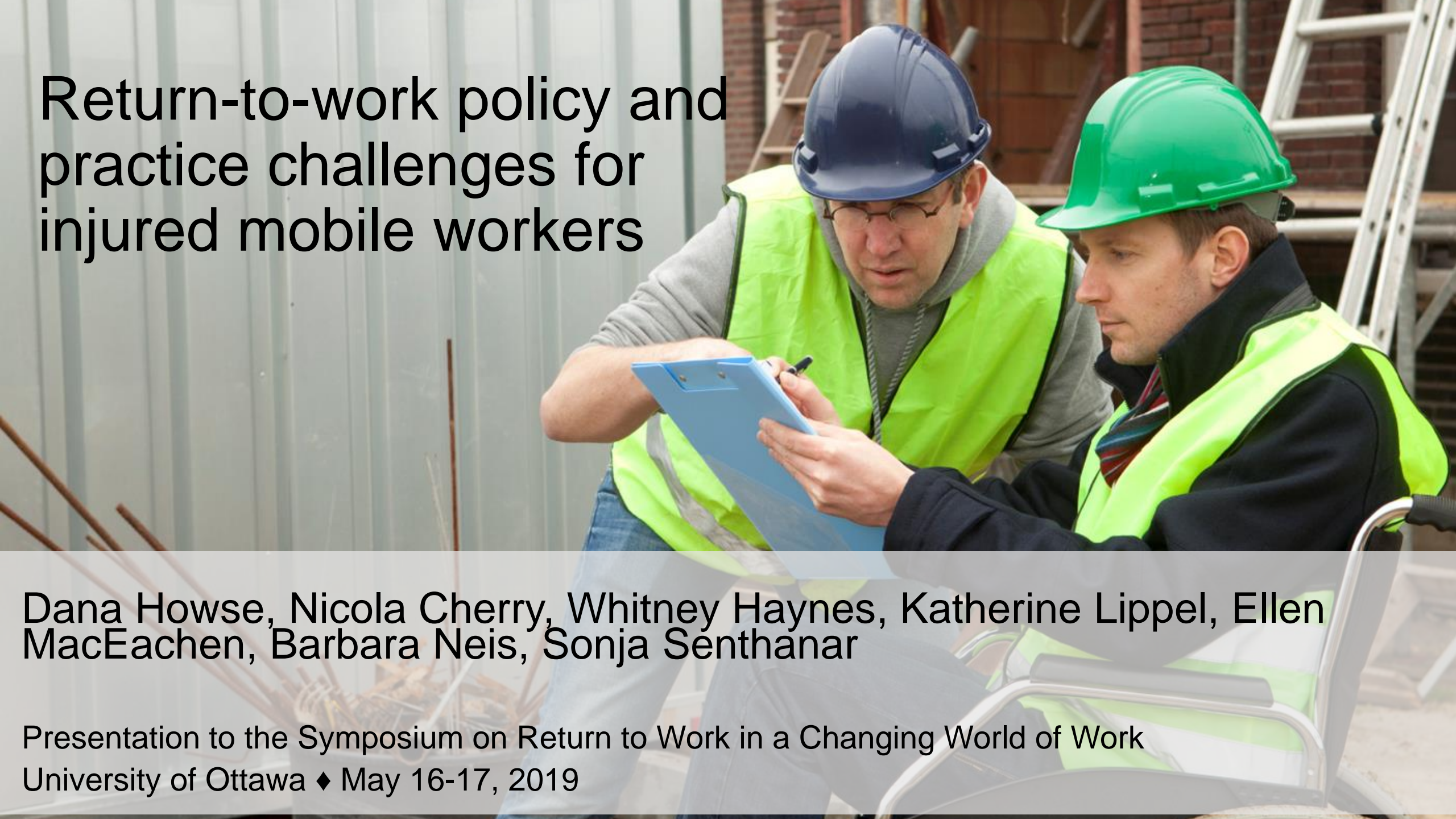


# Return-to-work policy and practice challenges for injured mobile workers



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What are return to work (RTW) experiences of workers who live in one place, and work, get injured, file for compensation, and participate in RTW in another?

# Adverse consequences of return to work



Associated with chronic disability, unemployment, financial & emotional suffering



Problematic claims associated with 80% of claims-related costs



## **Work mobility**

**Extended or complex travel to  
and within work**

**Increasingly challenging and  
complex**



Explore, *from the perspective of injured mobile workers*, the effectiveness of return to work (RTW) policies and programs and any mobility-related challenges.



Data drawn from 13 mobile workers in four provinces:

In-depth interviews with:

- mobile workers from NL
- precarious workers in Ontario and Quebec

Semi-structured interviews with mobile workers in Alberta



# Results

Sample (13): 4 women, 9 men

Variation in:

- Age
- Family situations
- Occupations
- Mobility scenarios
- RTW status
- Workers' compensation claim status



## Disrupted routines

*I was supposed to go on my next shift with [boyfriend] and I couldn't go, so we weren't able to see each other for a month because after that we're alternating shifts. Like his plane would fly out and my plane would fly in sort of thing.*

- Alice, ON, forestry, back injury





# Disrupted Routines

A man with dark hair, wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt, is sitting on a metal bench at night. He is looking out over a street with white lane markings. The scene is dimly lit, with some blurred lights in the background. The man's back is to the camera, and he is looking towards the left side of the frame.

*...Like I was pretty well stranded, I could get a ride there and then be told that I would have to wait eight hours to come home and I am only supposed to do two hours work.*

*- Jason, ON, temp, back injury*

## Extended absence from home

*My case worker said: “He worked here, he got hurt here, he can get treated here.” I flew back and forth for treatment 5 times before the surgery.*

- male, AB worker from Atlantic Canada, back injury

*I would have liked to heal at home. My father died 3 months after. I could have spent the winter with him.*

- male, AB worker from Atlantic Canada, knee injury

## Absence of social support

*...Didn't want to stay in a hotel alone. Wanted to be around family...Case manager was horrendous. Said we didn't have the proper medical facilities in [home province]. They wanted to deal with their doctors.*

- male, AB worker from Atlantic Canada, head injury

*And I was very much alone because I had moved from [home town] so my parents weren't accessible... You're in a new province, you've never been in before, you feel alone, isolated and, yeah, you have to make ends meet, you have to cut back.*

- female, NS, restaurant server, back injury

## Extensive travel for family

*My wife would take me to all my doctor appointments and, if I had to go to St. John's for an appointment I would have to stay over night.*

*They sent me to St. John's for five weeks to another program, they paid for it all, they put me in a hotel, my wife and I.*

- male, NL, electrician, hip injury

*After the surgery in Alberta my wife came to Calgary as a caregiver for 3 weeks, then I flew home.*

- male, AB worker from Atlantic Canada, back injury

## Financial hardship



*I got a local therapist and paid for it on my own... Going through my savings, feeling guilty. Paying for it myself. Taking it away from my family.*

- male, AB worker from Atlantic Canada, head injury

*I have kids that come and see me on the weekends and stuff but, lately I don't encourage them to come because I can't afford to feed them you know, and I can't afford to go get them.*

- Jason, ON, temp worker, back injury

Policy Gap:

Employer-provided housing  
blurs boundary between work  
and home

# Conclusions

Injured mobile workers experience unique RTW challenges:

- Impacts of work mobility amplified
- RTW adds new and different mobility
- Policy gaps impede RTW for mobile workers

Questions or comments?

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