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Page modified
Tuesday
2002-8-20 13:50

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Help

Search

Publiservice

Intranet Home Training IMT/CIO

Corp. Finance, Plan. & Sys.

Trade

Human Resources Consular

Physical Resources

DFAIT Internet

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Comparative Study on the Terms and Conditions of Employment of Foreign Service Officers – Three Perspectives on FS Retention

From: The Steering Committee of the Comparative Study on the Terms and Conditions of Employment of Foreign Service Officers

To: All employees at Headquarters and at missions

Date: 2002-08-19

Summary: As a direct follow up to the June 2001 FS Retention Survey, Mercer Human Resource Consulting reviewed three specific data sets on retention of officers in Canada's Foreign Service

Three Perspectives on FS Retention

At the conclusion of our *June 7, 2002* message that broadcast the results of the Comparative Study on the Terms and Conditions of Employment of Foreign Service Officers (The FS Study), we stated that further information would be forthcoming on FS retention at both DFAIT and C&I. As part of the comparative study, and as a direct follow-up to the June 2001 FS Retention Survey, Mercer Human Resource Consulting was contracted to review three specific data sets on retention of officers in Canada's Foreign Service.

The Three Retention Data Sets

The three data sets were: the Findings of the June 2001 FS Retention Survey, a September 2001 Treasury Board Secretariat's FS Retention Data Report, and a sampling of the actual reasons stated by some 66 C&I and DFAIT FS employees, hired between 1990 and 2002, who separated from the Foreign Service over the same time frame. Mercer's primary task was to ascertain whether the reasons cited by 66 FS employees who separated from DFAIT and C&I could be appropriately linked with the TBS retention data and the findings of the June 2001 FS Retention Survey, i.e. were there convergent or divergent trends amongst the three data sets.

Mercer's Initial Findings

After considerable work, Mercer Human Resource Consultants concluded that significant differences in data composition and collection methodology applied in each of the three data sets did not allow for a clear delineation of where the trends amongst the three data sets converge or diverge. For example, the June 2001 FS Retention Survey data is based on 837 FS respondents and reflects three reasons at the time of the survey for potential separations, while detailing feelings and attitudes of FS towards their work, their management and their compensation. The sample of "reasons for separation" of DFAIT and C&I employees is based on historical data for separation from the Foreign Service, but a considerably smaller sampling, notably 16 C&I FS Officers and 50 DFAIT FS Officers. *In most cases, only one reason explaining the separation appeared on an employee's file. As such, only that reason could be captured.* Similarly, the TBS Retention Data Report is based on objective, statistical data, but is limited to broad reasons for separation (e.g. retirement, resignation). Given