

FSD'S AND OUR LIVES ABROAD

DEPARTURES I

As the Easter holidays approach, employees and their families are planning vacations and family reunions. Where the August and October columns focused on new arrivals at post following marriage, birth, or adoption, the present column will be the first instalment of a discussion of departures from post and how the Directives provide for or are affected by employees and/or their dependants leaving a post, whether temporarily or permanently.

First, a look at how the FSD's assist employees and/or their dependants leaving a post temporarily.

Travel and Leave Provisions

FSD 50 provides travel assistance to foreign service employees and their dependants at post to vacation in Canada or at some other location at least once per three-year tour of duty and as often as once a year at Level III and IV hardship posts. A minimum of ten compensation days' leave with pay must be taken; in addition, in exceptional situations where travel outside working hours is not possible, the employee may be granted travel leave, i.e., enough time off work to reach the destination of the approved trip up to the time it would take to get to the employee's headquarters.

FSD 51 provides for family reunion travel to offset the separation of a family due to an employee's assignment abroad. Although normally dependants travel to join the employee at post, travel expenses for the employee and/or the spouse to travel to the location of their dependant(s) or even to a third location with their dependant(s) may be approved for reasons acceptable to the deputy head. When travel expenses are authorized for an employee in this manner, the employee shall be charged the appropriate number of leave credits.

FSD 45 allows employees abroad to accumulate ten days of foreign service leave per year in addition to their annual leave, and to receive cash for their foreign service leave credits or to trade them in for a transportation entitlement up to the cost of return air fare to headquarters. To utilize this latter option, however, an employee must have accrued, and must trade in, ten days of foreign service leave credits.

Where health care and/or medical facilities at a post are inadequate or excessively expensive, FSD 41 provides for travel and living expenses for an employee or a dependant, including a dependent student, and in certain circumstances, for an escort as well as for any young child obliged to accompany

a parent on health care travel because child-care services are either not available or not cost-effective. The only leave provided under FSD 41 for an employee who leaves the post for medical treatment or to escort a dependant, is travel leave, and only when travel during non-working hours is not feasible. The other days the employee is absent from work must be charged against other leave credits or entitlements, e.g., sick leave, leave for family-related responsibilities. Up to eight days' additional leave may be granted as special leave under FSD 48.

The purpose of FSD 54, which deals with compassionate travel, is to compensate an employee serving abroad for those travel and sometimes living expenses incurred by the employee and/or the spouse and sometimes other members of the family unit in the event of the critical illness and/or the death of a parent, brother, sister or member of the family unit, which are over and above what would have been incurred had the employee been serving at headquarters. Generally, FSD 54 covers the full cost of travel and accommodation for up to five days only when the destination is the employee's headquarters; otherwise, the employee pays what it would have cost to travel to the relative's location from headquarters, and FSD 54 pays what it cost the employee over and above that to travel from the post. Similarly, FSD 54 provisions for travel leave, where it is not feasible for the employee to travel during non-working hours, cover only that portion of travel time required to get to the relative's location and return to the post which was over and above what it would have taken to get there from headquarters and return. An exception is made in the event of a dependent child's illness or death, when the total travelling time between the post and the child's location may be authorized as travel leave. The other days the employee is absent from work are charged against the employee's other leave entitlements, e.g., leave for family-related responsibilities or bereavement leave. As in the case of FSD 41, up to eight days' additional leave may be authorized as special leave under FSD 48.

Authorizations

The granting of leave and the approval of travel and other expenses are two separate functions.

Expenses for foreign service (vacation) travel and for family reunion travel (FSD's 50 and 51) must be authorized by the FSD Policy Implementation Section of ABSA. The cash payment or transportation entitlement trade-in options of FSD 45 must be authorized by the Pay Section (ABMP).

Authority to approve payment of travel and other expenses for health care travel (e.g., medical evacuation) and for compassionate travel under FSD's 41 and 54 has been delegated to the Head of Post.

Applications for leave must be signed by the employee's supervisor and approved by an authorized officer. The Head of Post is authorized to approve annual leave and foreign service (FSD 45) leave, and now also travel leave under FSD's 41 and 54. Applications for special leave under FSD 48, however, must be submitted to the Staff Relations Section (ABSR).

The Effect on Allowances

Because temporary absences of employees and/or their dependants from the post, even on temporary duty, affect the employees' allowances, it is most important that the Pay, Leave and Allowances Section (ABMP) be notified as soon as possible, even before an employee and/or dependant(s) leave on a trip, where an absence will exceed 25 compensation days (i.e., five weeks, including paid holidays, e.g., Good Friday and Easter Monday), so that no overpayments are made which would then have to be recovered — hardly a welcome expense on return from a vacation!

So, if you're planning a trip and need to request authorizations for leave and expenses for an Easter holiday, don't wait for spring, do it now!

Next issues: The second instalment of this discussion will take a similar look at how the Directives provide for and are affected by permanent departures from post.

The above is for general information only. Specific queries should be addressed to ABSA.

TEST YOUR O.S. (OTTAWA SMARTS)

Last issue we tested your "Trade Smarts"; now for your "Ottawa Smarts"

- 1) What does "Ottawa" mean?
- 2) When did it become a city? Why was it named "Ottawa"?
- 3) What colors are in the flag? What do the colors represent?
- 4) What cities are twinned with Ottawa?
- 5) Who was the first female mayor? How long was her term of office?
- 6) When will the next municipal election be held?

See page 18 for the answers