

The Homecoming

*Another Move,
Another Challenge*

When Sally and Dennis Horak returned to Canada after three years in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, they faced yet another challenge in their 12-year foreign service career: reintegration.

"Before we left Canada we were well prepared; things were structured with Arabic lessons, including information on the Saudi culture, and a checklist of pre-departure things to do," said Mrs. Horak. She had completed a community co-ordinator course

"The whole family is very happy to be back in Canada," she said. The two children, Jessi, 9½, and Luke, 8, are back in their neighborhood school. Children and parents have caught up with old friends and already made new ones.

But there have been a few bumps in the road. Mrs. Horak packed their health records in the sea shipment because she was sure that Health Canada, where they had been given all their shots before leaving, would have these on file. They did not. The children had to have their health records to be allowed to go to school. The family was then told to contact the Ottawa Board of Education, where an inattentive clerk, after hearing that they were coming

"The support is out there, at SERV and the FSCA and so on, but who has the time to go over? There is no kit just for the returning spouse. I think we need a link between the spouse and what the Department has in place to help. Perhaps a community co-ordinator role in Ottawa is what's missing," she said.

From Performance Measurement Initiative

To a New Approach

"A New Approach" component will be added to relevant trade-related courses now that the big push to introduce the Performance Measurement Initiative (PMI) has been successfully delivered.

"That means a new way of looking at how we do business, how we define our clients and how we provide services," says Roger Bélanger, Trade Commissioner Service Overseas Operations Division (TCS).

TCS, together with CFSI, developed and delivered this training program called "A New Approach to Helping Business Abroad." More than 1200 employees in over 60 cities worldwide have been trained by Departmental experts. Workshops were delivered at posts to program managers and to all commercial staff. In Canada, employees in International Trade Centres in all provinces and in the International Business Development Branch and the other Bureaux at DFAIT, as well as Heads of Mission, have already received training in the new program.

Training courses on the "New Approach" concept will be given during the entry level program at DFAIT and will be part of pre-posting training. Other Departmental branches will be offered training as well.

The program is backed up by an Intranet site containing guidelines and tools produced by the TCS Post Support Unit.

"The focus is on results," says Mr. Bélanger. "The emphasis now is on spreading the word to people in Ottawa."

Watch for more in a future issue.



Max Photo

The Horak family gets settled again in Ottawa. Left to right, Jessi, Luke, Sally and Dennis

before her first posting and so was able to step into that job in Stockholm and Warsaw, and then Riyadh.

Back in Ottawa, Mr. Horak is in the Middle East Division (GMR). His wife, meanwhile, is coping with air shipment boxes and suitcases, waiting for the late sea shipment held up at the other end. They have just moved into the house they bought in the three-day house-hunting trip allowed after their return. Mrs. Horak is very upbeat.

to Ottawa from Saudi Arabia, sent them to an office dealing with new immigrants. The children were expected to undergo placement tests, which could not be scheduled until Sept. 9. But school started Sept. 1. Mr. Horak finally got hold of the superintendent of schools in his area, and the children started on time.

"The employee returns, but he or she has to go to work. The spouse has the house, the food, the kids, school, health cards, shopping. I had to ask the cashier at Loblaws how to use my swipe card. She thought I must be from Mars," laughed Mrs. Horak.