

INTRODUCTION

What Are The FSDs?

Along with other administrative publications and authorities, the FSDs are the rules that govern your life as a career foreign service employee, when you and your family are abroad. Your collective bargaining unit and management both recognize the importance that comparability and incentive-inducement have for maintaining a good working relationship and encouraging employees to serve abroad. However, they are equally aware that these principles are not without limitations. This is why analysis and evaluation of the intent, substance and application of the Directives is an actively ongoing process that culminates every three years in joint consultations with the bargaining agents in the National Joint Council. Your copy of the FSDs is actually the end-product of these consultations. The statements, procedures, provisions, rules and instructions which form the text are a consensus on the most equitable means of responding to many of the conditions that are unique to service outside Canada.

The FSDs form part of the collective agreements which set out rights and obligations. Like any other contract, differences of opinion as to interpretation or application sometimes will occur. If you don't understand something, ask about it. Most conflicts can and should be resolved through clarification from Mission Administration or from the relevant section at headquarters. Of course, if you have difficulty with the application or interpretation of a Directive you have the right to present a grievance under the National Joint Council (NJC) redress procedure. Your bargaining agent or Staff Relations Section (ABE) will explain the correct procedure to be followed.

If you do not already have a copy of the FSDs, pick one up from the Foreign Service Benefits Division (ABM) or from The Posting Centre (ABMH). Later chapters in this Handbook will deal with several of the Directives in some detail. For now, try to start thinking about the FSDs in terms of how they will affect your relationship with your employer and your personal lifestyle.

Personal Implications of Rotational Employment Outside Canada

While living in Canada, you are more or less free to do as you wish and socialize with whomever you please outside office hours. Your employer is not going to tell you how to get to work, how to pay your rent, what kind of housing to occupy, or when to see the doctor. And if an employer tried to do this, you would probably quit or take the issue to court under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Moreover, in Canada, the employer's legal concern for your dependants extends only as far as your tax withholding status and mandatory health insurance.

However, the minute you receive notice of assignment, the FSDs come into play and your employer becomes much more involved in your public and private life. To begin with, your dependants figure more prominently since the employer will assume some responsibility for their welfare when they reside with you at the mission or when involuntary separation occurs out of operational necessity. Before your posting arrangements can be finalized, a medical examination (and sometimes a dental examination) will be required in order to ensure that you and your family are in good health. Even before you get to a mission, you may discover that you have been assigned a staff quarter different in size and quality from the house you now occupy. In Ottawa, you take the bus to work but at the mission it might be necessary to use a car because local transportation is unavailable, erratic or unsafe. As for socialization after work, you might find that life in a compound, such as exists at a small number of missions, means regularly seeing the same people and sharing the same pastimes, which, depending on the individuals concerned, has its good and bad aspects.

Experienced members of the foreign service community recognize that on any posting they almost always lose some of their independence, some freedom of choice and very often some of their privacy as well. The examples above are some of the personal implications of rotational employment. It is well known that there are many others including those that affect the spouse and children more profoundly than the employee. Spouses often have to give up employment in Canada and then try to find work abroad, and children have to leave friends and adjust to new classmates and environments.

With this in mind, take a good hard look at your situation and discuss it very carefully with your family. There are really no "good missions" or "bad missions." People make a posting good or bad for themselves by their ability, or lack thereof, to adapt to different circumstances. The extent to which you and your