

accounts and notify creditors that you are no longer responsible for your spouse's debts. Take half of any joint bank accounts.

3. With a division of assets in view, make sure your inventory is up-to-date, and have valuable items appraised.
4. Do a financial analysis and examine how you can improve your financial situation (for example, by developing marketable skills to enable you to get back into the job market).
5. Avoid situations which increase your vulnerability, if necessary to the point of only communicating with your spouse through the mediation of a lawyer.
6. Document your participation in the life of the foreign service as a spouse. Have certificates of volunteer work at the mission, letters of recommendation, a letter from your Head of Mission. Most lawyers are unfamiliar with the realities of life in the foreign service, and it may be necessary to persuade your lawyer and the court that you have made a valuable contribution to the foreign service life you and your spouse have led together. This may make a difference to the eventual settlement you receive.
7. Look into avenues of assistance for getting back into the work force:
  - Contact the Spousal Employment Counsellor located in The Posting Centre at 995-9751 or 995-9347.
  - Inquire about the Workshops for Spouses organized by Spousal and Community Services. Such workshops as Resume Writing and Career/Life Planning may be particularly useful. Most provincial governments offer counselling on re-entry into the work force.

### **Custody, Maintenance and Guardianship**

Employees going abroad leaving children or spouses who are subject to separation agreements or court-ordered stipulations should not risk embarrassment and unneeded legal difficulties through failure to live up to their financial obligations.

Another important consideration is the problem of access to your children while you are living abroad. This is definitely a time for the employee and those he/she considers important to be realistic and seek advice from sympathetic people who are not emotionally involved. Although it might appear rather late to be making decisions on access, a cancelled posting may be preferable to aborting an assignment in mid-stream.

Dependants who are not residing with their parents by reason of attendance in school or infirmity should have designated Guardians. The party or parties to whom children are entrusted should be provided with written authorization for them to act in loco parentis.

### **Resources**

- Employee Assistance Program Counsellors, call Brenda Abud-Lapierre at (613) 992-6167, Laurier Beaudoin at (613)992-1641, or Barbara Barr at (613)995-9547.
- The Divorce Act
- Provincial Law Societies
- Several books are available (Refer to the Selected Bibliography)