

- ensure that designated group members are systematically represented on selection and promotion boards
- ensure that the assessment tools and methods are barrier free to designated group members
- contribute to the development and update of the employment equity action plan for the Department.

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Doreen Séguin
Employment Equity Advisor
Human Resources Policy.

New Division Integrates Assignments

Transparency is the key to the creation of the new integrated Assignments Division (HPF) which was formed to eliminate distinctions, discrimination and barriers to opportunity for assignments in all groups of employees, both rotational and non-rotational (single assignments abroad for the latter).



Guy Saint-Jacques is the Director of the new Assignments Division which is responsible for the assignment of all rotational employees and single assignments for non-rotational staff.

Director Guy Saint-Jacques is working on it. "We are making genuine efforts to increase transparency in the assignment process," says Mr. Saint-Jacques. HPF, which has become "one-stop shopping" for managers, now posts all assignment vacancies on the Intranet so everyone has access to this information. Another step is to publish guidelines and criteria in the near future to let people know how assignments are decided. These are among many of the proposals in the new Human Resources Action Plan based on the recommendations from the Champions as well as on the Human Resources Strategy previously announced by the Deputies.

Dealing with all groups together in one division overcomes discrepancies. The processes are "harmonized", to facilitate and encourage, for example, single assignments of non-rotational personnel. Employee-couple assignments, especially from different streams, are more efficiently handled within the one division.

To assign people to their satisfaction and that of the Department, one has to look at other DFAIT developments which feed into the assignment process. Among these, training is at the top of the list because it is designed to increase the mobility and career opportunities of each employee.

"We are trying to refine assignment guidelines so that employees with the right profile have a chance at any job that comes up," says Mr. Saint-Jacques. The introduction of the five-year Foreign Service Development Program (FSDP), for example, trains and prepares people for assignments at home and abroad. The implementation of the Universal Classification System (UCS) could regroup employees in the creation of one single category of administrative assistant. A Task Force will be established to examine the prospects of pooling certain non-rotational groups to improve mobility. "The goal is to offer employees better career prospects and a broader range of assignments," says Mr. Saint-Jacques.

HPF is also interested in promoting cross-stream movements. "We're trying to eliminate ad hoc decisions," says Mr. Saint-Jacques. "For employees to make a permanent cross-stream move, and not just take an assignment, we need to put rules in place."

Lateral entry is also a sore point that needs clarification. "We want to ensure that we have the right candidates with the right competencies as the needs of the foreign service evolve," he says.

The Trade Commissioner Service has taken interesting initiatives in recent years, triggered by the need to measure the work of officers here and abroad. HPF works closely with this part of DFAIT because recruitment and training are related to the assignment of officers and to satisfying the needs and expectations of companies down the road.

HPF works closely with the new Recruitment, Counselling and Promotion Division (HPC) to help employees plan their career. Mr. Saint-Jacques said that the two divisions are working together, for example, on recruitment and promotion and exchanging information on issues related to career development. When asked about the merits of specializing, he suggests that employees develop two specialties, one in a geographic area and the second, a functional specialty such as legal, economic reporting, trade development, trade policy, etc. Language is also very important. The Department needs people who have acquired difficult-to-learn languages and who are willing to accept more than one posting to countries with that language. Right now, only 16 per cent of jobs requiring knowledge of a foreign language are filled by officers with the recommended level of proficiency to work in that environment. HPF is working with CFSI on this aspect of training for assignments.



The Supervisory Development Program was held from January 5 to 13, 2000 at the Bisson Campus. On the photo, back row, from the left: Jean Riopel, URR, Roberto Edjoc, CFSM, Jaclyne Campeau, CFSM, Teresa Butler, SXIM, Rod Lemmex, instructor, Pierre Prieur, SXTT, Kim Girtel, AER, William Boggs, SXTT, François Bazinet, SXTC, Middle row, from the left: Hélène Gaudreau, MINA, Trudy Adams, EAI, Louise Rousseau, PJP, June Lemmex, instructor, Rose Regimbald, SIX, and Sharon Kessel, Training Program Manager. Absent: Jasmine Panthaky and Perry Marleau.