

PERSONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ROTATIONAL EMPLOYMENT

While you are 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. His legal concern for your dependents extends only as far as your tax withholding status and mandatory health insurance.

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 dependents figure more prominently in the picture since the employer will assume some responsibility for their welfare when they reside with you at the post 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 the post, you may discover that you have been assigned a staff-quarter different in size and quality than the house you now occupy. In Ottawa, you take the bus to work but at the post it might be necessary to use a car because local transportation is unavailable, erratic or unsafe. As to socialization after work, you might find that life in a compound, such as exists at a small number of posts, means regularly seeing the same people and sharing the same pastimes.

Experienced members of the foreign service community recognize that on any posting they almost always lose some freedom of choice and very often some of their privacy as well. The examples above are but some of the personal implications of rotational employment. It is well known that there are many others including those which affect the spouse and children more profoundly than the employee.

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 posts" or "bad posts". People make a post good or bad for themselves by their ability, or lack thereof, to adapt to different circumstances. The extent to which you and your family are willing and able to adapt will have a considerable bearing on your satisfaction with a career in the foreign service. Above all, know what you are getting into before starting a new assignment because the costs of an aborted posting can have far reaching consequences for your health, welfare and family relationships.