

CHAPTER 1

EARLY PREPARATIONS

1.1 Introduction

Well, the day has finally arrived! At long last you know where and when you will be posted, even though the exact departure date may be several months in the future. Although you may have done some research on the mission already, it's a good idea to look over some of the information available through the department. These include:

- Reviewing the *Mission Report* and the *Mission Education Facilities Report*
- Getting materials from the Consulate, Embassy or High Commission of the country in which the mission is located
- Talking to people who have served at the mission
- Scanning the FSDs, checking which ones apply and to what extent.

At this point as well, you may be overwhelmed with questions about your new posting, such as:

- Will my spouse be able to work?
- Where will my children be attending school?
- What will my house or apartment be like?
- Will I need a car to get around?
- What are the health conditions and recreational activities like at the mission?
- Will I take any leave en route, or after my arrival?
- What happens if an emergency comes up while I'm overseas?
- How much money will I need to see me through the move?

Try to answer these and other questions as well as you can from the information available, but make notes on any points that you will want clarified during later briefings or appointments at headquarters.

In addition, before you receive your Posting Confirmation Form, a number of items have to be considered and some advanced planning and research carried out in areas such as working opportunities abroad for your spouse, educational facilities for your children, caring for elderly parents, your financial situation, and last but certainly not least, your inventory. During this preparation period, you will also have a medical (and perhaps a dental) examination, you may be starting foreign language training, and you will be attending the pre-posting workshops and talking to the Employee Assistance counsellors. Enough talk, let's examine some of these topics right now.

1.2 Employment of Family Members

The Department acknowledges the fact that two-income, two-career families have become the norm in Canadian society. Hence, the complex issue of spousal employment within a rotational lifestyle has received increased visibility. If you have family members who wish to work in the country to which you are being posted, you should be aware of certain facts and of services provided by the Department to assist spouses in looking for job opportunities.

While neither headquarters nor missions can act as employment agencies, the Department will offer encouragement and whatever assistance is possible to spouses and dependants seeking employment. Unfortunately, appropriately paid work abroad, particularly at a professional level, is not easy to find. In many countries there are linguistic, legal and economic restrictions on the employment of non-nationals. As a consequence, only a portion of those who seek work while abroad are able to find jobs compatible with their expectations. Many seek a compromise in volunteer or educational activities related to career interests. If your spouse is interested in working abroad and/or on returning to Canada, you should both read the following carefully.