

Spousal Employment Counsellor

The Spousal Employment Counsellor at Spousal and Community Services (ABMX), located in The Posting Centre (ABMH), can offer employees and members of their family information on employment in Canada and abroad. Written and audio-visual material is available on résumés, interviews, skills-development courses, choice of career and possible sources of employment. Spouses and employees should contact the Counsellor as soon as they know about a posting, or upon their return.

Reciprocal Employment Arrangements

A Reciprocal Employment Arrangement (REA) is an arrangement between Canada and another country whereby, on a reciprocal basis, the spouses and children of accredited persons at the missions can enter the local labour market. REA's remove all restrictions on the employment of diplomatic dependants and put them on a basis of equality with the local population, except in those cases where there is a requirement for a security clearance or for specific qualifications in order to practice certain professions.

As of June 1993, Reciprocal Employment Arrangements existed with 38 countries: Argentina, Australia, Barbados, Brazil, Britain, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guyana, Haiti, Hungary, India, Israel, Jamaica, Morocco, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, the Philippines, Sweden, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, the United States, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition to these formal arrangements, REA's are "deemed to exist" with Hong Kong, Ireland, Ivory Coast and Singapore. This means in effect that many missions' local labour market is open to Canadian spouses.

There are, however, certain implications to securing work in the host country under the terms of an REA that you should be aware of. First, spouses and/or dependants obtaining employment under terms of an REA normally lose all immunity from civil and administrative jurisdiction with respect to all matters arising out of such employment. Second, they are also liable for Canadian income tax on any employment earnings. (Tax paid abroad may be credited toward tax owed in Canada. This question should be raised with Revenue Canada when submitting an income tax return.)

In the case of countries where there is no REA, it may still be possible to find employment at the mission as locally engaged staff, through CIDA contracts, replacing staff on holiday, teaching English or French to Canada-based staff, or as Community Coordinator. There are 80 missions eligible to hire a Community Coordinator on contract to welcome newcomers, run an information centre, organize community activities and publish a community news bulletin. Candidates for the job must submit a proposal to the Mission and should have been living at the mission for at least six months. One can sometimes obtain contract work with international organizations or other embassies (although they would probably give preference to their own spouses).

It is interesting to note that through a special arrangement with the United States, spouses accompanying employees posted there can claim unemployment insurance benefits as if they were still in Canada. Should you wish to inquire about this, contact the Unemployment Insurance Commission office in Belleville, which deals with such claims. Address: 228 Dundas St., Belleville, Ontario K8N 5C1. Telephone: (613) 969-3550.

Potential Employers Abroad

ABMX has information on the general employment situation for all countries where we have missions, plus lists of potential employers. This information can be discussed in individual counselling sessions with the Spousal Employment Counsellor. Once the posting is confirmed, a letter or telegram can be sent to the Mission to inquire about specific employment possibilities.

Spousal Employment Workshops

ABMX also offers workshops for spouses on topics such as Teaching English or French, working as a Consultant, Writing and Editing and consular and immigration work.

Reimbursement for Professional Association Dues and Training

Spouses on posting who were employed in their profession up until six months prior to departure should consult FSD 17 regarding reimbursement of dues to professional associations while abroad, and costs of mandatory retraining on return to Canada. This directive is administered by ABMX. For reimbursement, proof of employment in the relevant profession to within six months of being posted, proof