

CHAPTER 4

ARRIVAL AT THE MISSION

4.1 Introduction

Well, you've finally made it! You've passed the "neither here nor there" feeling of living in a hotel before departure, you've had an enjoyable trip to the new mission, and are now getting yourself reestablished in a new environment. This process is in many ways the reverse of the relocation procedure that you have just been completed. Unless Crown-held staff quarters have already been assigned, much of the early days will be spent hunting for suitable accommodation. Soon you'll be dealing with the movers once again; the unpacking and putting away begins as you aim to make your residence a place where you will feel comfortable for the next few years. During your first month, you will be exploring your new surroundings and comparing the reality against what you learned prior to arrival. Before you know it, you will be meeting new people, making new friends and learning how to operate successfully in a foreign country.

4.2 Organization of the Mission

During all of those whirlwind days of moving in, you will probably notice that you aren't as independent as you were in Canada, you will undoubtedly be calling the Administrative Officer at "Mother Embassy" every day, or several times a day, to ask any number of questions relating to your new home. The following advice will help you in dealing with your new life abroad.

Based on the importance Canada attaches to its presence in the Host Country, there may be an Embassy or High Commission, or one or several Consulates at which programs such as General Relations, Employment and Immigration, Trade, Aid and others are carried out. Each program has a manager who is responsible to the Head of Mission — the Ambassador (High Commissioner), Consul-General, Consul — for its effective delivery. At smaller missions, there is generally one program manager who is entirely responsible for administrative matters including those affecting the locally engaged staff, as well as Canadian employees and their dependants. At medium-sized missions, there is generally an Administrative Officer or Office Manager who is usually a rotational employee. The larger missions have Administration Sections in their own right. These are usually headed by a more senior rotational employee who is supported by a team of Canadian and locally engaged personnel. Like program managers, those in charge of Mission Administration are equally responsible to the Head of Mission. Committees are set up from time to time to monitor various areas of administrative concern such as Accommodation, Security and matters touched on by the FSDs. A Mission Management Committee, generally chaired by the Head of Mission and composed of program managers and invited employees, meets regularly to review program and administrative matters, formulate solutions to problems and delegate responsibility for making changes.

Administrative Problems

When you have a problem related to the carrying out of your duties, the person to see is your program manager. If you have problems with your entitlements and obligations under the FSDs, the Mission Administrative Officer or Office Manager is generally the one who will be able to help.

The duties of the Mission Administrative Officer are no mean task. You will probably find that person is almost always working under pressure and attempting to deal with a dozen situations at once. The administration of any Mission — from the smallest to the largest — is very difficult, particularly in that the person responsible always has to represent the interests of both management and the employee. The Administrative Officer should have a thorough knowledge of the FSDs, Mission budgets, standing operational instructions and local conditions. He or she should know the items to which you are entitled and those which, in practical fact, can be provided. Administration is not an exact science and there is