
"representation." Social gatherings are, for you and your spouse, a good opportunity to get to know people in your host country in a relaxed, hospitable atmosphere.

Impact on Families

The rotational Foreign Service lifestyle has been described as life on a carousel, and there's no doubt you (and your families) will have your ups and downs as you repeat the cycle of going on a posting and re-entering Canadian life. Although, technically, the department focuses on posting the employee, practically speaking, the married employee's spouse, children, and sometimes elderly dependants are swept into the exciting, busy and, often difficult aspects of each posting.

Potential Foreign Service Officers must consider very carefully what this nomadic lifestyle means regarding the family's well-being, children's education, and spousal employment. Postings don't solve individual or family difficulties; on the other hand, the close-knit family can become stronger when members pull together.

Education of Children

Foreign Service parents make many decisions concerning their children's schooling. As the quality of overseas education is uneven from country to country, it is not always possible to ensure continuity of subject matter and instructional methods for children.

Abroad, most Canadian diplomatic children attend British, American or French schools. An Education Counsellor is available to offer

advice and assistance for families going abroad and returning to Canada to find the school in each location best suited to a child's individual needs.

Employment of Spouses

Continuous professional employment overseas is usually not possible for spouses. The effect the loss of a spouse's job and career opportunities will have on your family should be considered carefully.

Spouses now working for the federal public service can apply for leave without pay for up to five years in order to accompany their partner abroad. A Spousal Employment Counsellor is available at headquarters to advise on employment possibilities that do exist abroad and to assist spouses with job-hunting techniques and skills on their return to Ottawa.

In many countries, despite the lifting of formal barriers, it is difficult for spouses to find jobs due to linguistic and economic restrictions on the employment of foreigners. Some find salaried work with an international agency, an embassy or an international school; others do volunteer work or studies related to their career or personal interests. Self-employment has been the answer for entrepreneurs with portable skills in such areas as tutoring, photography, writing, word processing or catering.

Life will be turbulent, frustrating, intriguing, and, always, challenging. But then, if you (and your family) were not looking for an extraordinary career, you would not be considering the Foreign Service. Only the adventuresome need apply.