



Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee

Relocation - Consultation Report



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FOREWORD

The second discussion paper of the RCMP External Review Committee entitled "Relocation - A Painless Process" was distributed for consultation in January 1989.

The Committee wishes to express its grateful appreciation to those organizations and individuals who provided comments on this discussion paper.

Respondents' participation in the consultation process is essential to ensure that the Committee's research into human resource management issues in the field of policing is comprehensive. In the interest of confidentiality, quotations provided in this report are anonymous.

Research is currently underway on additional discussion papers, to be released periodically.

Robert F. Benson
Executive Director
RCMP External Review Committee

RELOCATION - CONSULTATION REPORT

1. Consultation

(a) Method and Objective

For all its research publications, the Committee has adopted a two-phase approach; first producing a discussion paper outlining the significant issues regarding a subject, followed by a report of the comments or views expressed by a predetermined readership regarding the contents of the discussion paper.

The Committee's purpose in these consultations is to verify the accuracy of its data, gather feed-back on the form and content of the discussion paper, obtain models or options that may have been overlooked and complete the comparative analysis section of the paper.

The Committee consulted the Attorneys General and Solicitors General of the Provinces and Territories, the Commissioner of the RCMP and the National Executive of the RCMP's divisional staff relations representatives. The Ontario Provincial Police and the Sûreté du Québec as well as a representative number of members of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and the Canadian Police Association were consulted. In the federal employment sector, the Committee consulted the Public Service Commission, the Treasury Board Secretariat, the Department of National Defence, and the Department of the Solicitor General. Specific major Canadian corporations were also canvassed for their views or comments. At their request, the New South Wales Police Department (Australia) and the Canada Ports Police were added to the Committee's research consultation lists. In all, 150 individuals and organizations were provided a copy of the discussion paper on relocation for consultation purposes.

Response figures were as follows:

Organization	Per Cent Responding
Government	
- Federal	25.0%
- Provincial	25.0%
Police	
- Commissions	0.0%
- Forces	7.5%
- Members' associations	3.0%
Private Sector	10.0%

As the numbers indicate, the Committee received relatively few responses. To some

extent, this can be explained by the fact that only a small number of organizations on the consultation list actually relocate their employees and have either experience or knowledge of the issues associated with relocations. The Committee does not determine whether an organization is consulted on the basis of, whether or not the issue is directly relevant to that organization. Such an approach might improve the statistics on the return rate, but might also prevent an individual from sharing information useful to the discussion of the issue under review.

(b) General Comments

Respondents expressed their continued interest in the comparative approach of the research which identifies a range of employers, their practices and procedures.

Some general comments regarding the paper follow:

"Your discussion paper is timely, informative and I look forward to receiving the report of the comments and views in follow-up."



"The discussion paper was well researched and well written. From my perspective outside the police community the paper provided some insights into the obligations and investments of the police employer and the demands of police work on members of the force as well as specific relocation issues."



"You have taken an extremely humane approach to analysing a situation that has tremendous impact upon the family unit."



"The paper presents a good overview of the kinds of problems which commonly arise within a workforce employed by large, transprovincial companies. It also provides good, detailed information on different financial problems which might reasonably be expected to occur, especially with respect to real estate."

Citing the limited sources of consolidated information regarding law enforcement human resource management issues, respondents expressed interest and appreciation for the opportunity to receive the Committee's research papers dealing with these matters.

2. Commentary on Content

Comments received regarding the content of the paper proved to be both expansive and substantial. Employers who relocate employees indicated that shrinking budgets and inflation-linked programs such as relocation have required managers to be increasingly aware of the financial impact of the mobility needs of their workforce. They are also aware of the changing attitudes of their employees and families regarding relocations and the shifting priorities of such a program.

Respondents representing both employers and employees, clearly expressed concern regarding the financial burden of relocations, particularly for police where the majority of relocations were believed essential to meet operational or organizational requirements and commitments. The "domino effect" of a relocation was also identified as a concern for some employers. One relocation may very well engender others as personnel across the organisation move to fill the vacancies created by each subsequent move. This can be quite costly. Some employers in an effort to ensure that relocations were reduced or eliminated, set up committees to review relocation policies, practices and in some cases actual relocations before the fact.

"I would like to have seen some discussion of cost/benefit related to the added organizational cost of maintaining a mobile work force under a generous set of options. It is one thing to have management discretion for flexible application of policies; it is quite another to have the budget capacity to offer enhanced benefits widely and thus to deal with impediments to mobility and to meeting the needs of employees. These are things that we have to address in day-to-day operations."



"Of major concern to our Corporation is the frequency factor involved in employee relocations. We will be implementing tighter control over the number of relocations an employee can make and the length of time in between an individual's relocations. This issue is only briefly addressed in your report. We put more emphasis on it due to the high cost of relocating an employee and we believe that tighter control in this area will result in great savings to us."



"Senior Force management would prefer to reduce the total number of relocations in an effort to live within allocation, but because such a large percentage of relocations are non-discretionary (i.e. contractual), this is very difficult."



"Financial constraints on relocations have an adverse effect on Force morale and a sense of fairness."



We estimate that, on average, the total cost to relocate an employee who owns a home, is about 13% of the value of the home."

Some respondents felt that there remained certain measures which employers could adopt to assist employees in relocating which were not costly, such as collating financial/real estate or profile information regarding a new community. This would serve to prepare and orient the employee and family to new surroundings.

"I have recently been able to locate specific publications to assist in this area, such as the Canadian Real Estate Association Books of Information for Home Buyers and Home Sellers, the Royal LePage Survey of House Prices, and the Canadian Banker's Association booklet titled Mortgage Wise. Community information can often be obtained from Chamber of Commerce offices and Industrial Development offices to assist the member in becoming aware of information as diverse as population and rainfall in the community."

It should be noted that comments such as this which refer to specific sources of information which may be consulted are useful to the Committee.

Other comments were intended to note that, despite policies to the contrary or in the absence of clear guidance, some relocations occurred under less than favourable circumstances for the employee and family. As an example it was stated that some police personnel were being asked to accept a new posting albeit promotional in an isolated area " ... in a matter of hours and in several cases less than one day."

It was also noted that in addition to the incidental expenses listed in the paper, police personnel incurred financial losses when unable to complete an educational program in which they were registered or terminated memberships in clubs. Family members also incurred losses when terminating employment to follow in the family's relocation.

"... I noted a high incidence of family members losing jobs on transfer and believe that on average these family members lost 6 months employment during the relocation."

Other comments and views ranged broadly from emphasis on certain aspects covered to outlining certain deficiencies or aspects not dealt with in the paper.

"Compensating R.C.M.P. members for the direct expenses associated with relocation (i.e. moving costs, guarantee re: house sales and mortgage rates, supplementing for loss of spouse's income etc.) only partially addresses the inequities/financial hardships of relocation. Private sector salaries are usually set to reflect regional economies and cost of living, whereas R.C.M.P. salaries are standard right across Canada. Consequently, the direct expense of relocation (although the most obvious) may not have as lasting a financial impact as the effect of a non-adjusted salary to compensate for regional disparities. To determine an effective solution for the financial problems of relocation, both the short and the long-term impacts must be adequately addressed."



"It is my view that salary should not be tied to relocation expenses. Is it safe to assume that an executive at a salary of \$10,000 per month, owns a two bedroom condominium and only has one dependant has less incidental expenses than an employee who only earns \$3,000 per month, owns a four-bedroom home and has five or six dependents? Perhaps consideration should be extended to this expense being based on the numbers of persons in the household who are being relocated. Tying the expense to the employee's salary is inequitable and may very well be unrealistic in this era."



"A serious problem ... is the relocation of police officers in small communities where there is no viable local real estate market. There would seem to be two solutions, providing rental accommodation and a guaranteed home sale plan, however both options are expensive and difficult to implement in times of fiscal restraint."



"Your findings and discussion on the dual income family are of great interest to us. Every day we are facing this situation more often. You do not offer many solutions to the problem other than counselling. Perhaps items such as preparation of resume fees and job-hunting trip expenses should be considered."



"Another item of concern is the taxable incidental expense allowance. A cost savings would be incurred if tighter controls were implemented in this area. Instead of issuing an employee a lump sum payment, actual expenses could be reimbursed as long as receipts are provided. We find that most employees do not spend their entire allowance on valid relocation expenses."



"There is also little in the way of discussion about the multicultural nature of the work performed by a national police force, and the problems which arise when relocated police officers and their families must maintain intimate contact with cultures other than those predominant in southern Canada. Detailed information should be provided on the efficacy of psychological testing, or other criteria for testing the suitability of candidates for service in isolated non-EuroCanadian cultural locations. It would also be useful to have a discussion about the most suitable kinds of incentives to attract the best candidates for northern service. As well, it would be useful to have some discussion of the obligations of the employer to provide suitable pre-relocation orientation to the employee and his family, including cross-cultural training and language courses."



"While it may well be necessary, from the point of view of the employees, to rotate personnel, such rotation may have long term effects on the ability of small communities to develop trust with the police, in the long run creating an obstacle to police effectiveness."

3. Conclusion

While relocation of employees is not a human resource management issue for all employers canvassed, including the police, it is clear from the comments and views received by the Committee that it is an issue of increasing interest to those affected whether employer or employee. Costs are identified as the single major issue; it seems of primary interest that cost-effective solutions be found. This is particularly true of organizations which are publicly funded.

Comments received indicate that there is no agreement on who should bear the costs of relocation services. One employer argued that as all relocations were for promotional reasons, any problems associated with the relocation are not the responsibility of the employer as it is fully within the employee's option to refuse the promotion and hence the relocation. Most employers, however, accept varying degrees of responsibility for their relocation policies and practices and have established a range of services associated with the relocation. Of these, most are at the stage where their budgets are severely burdened by the necessity to relocate employees. More stringent monitoring of policies and practices is either being considered or implemented.

Both employers and employees also indicate support for enhanced flexibility in the treatment of relocations particularly to areas where significant real estate costs are involved. Employers are developing innovative and custom-made approaches in providing benefits which address actual expenses or particular hardships for employees. This opens the door to criticism of unequal treatment. Given checks and balances to monitor the possibility of abuses, it has, however, been supported by some employers on the basis that it provides more effectively for employee needs. These employers expect to be better able to identify the exact nature and sources of their relocation expenses as well as benefit from some savings where possible.

Employers are acutely aware that administrative policies and practices as well as their application have a significant impact on employee morale. The range of services which they include in their relocation programs provides a measure of their ability to deal with both the social and financial needs of a mobile workforce.

Most respondents have focussed their comments on the financial aspects of relocation. Economic conditions in Canada seem to indicate a continuing trend regarding some inflationary impact on costs and reduced or zero growth budgets in the public sector.

In this environment, employers say they are reviewing their human resource planning systems to ensure that the movement of personnel is both necessary and carried out in the most cost-effective manner possible. While this is not a new goal for these organizations, this review has led some to the realization that their human resource planning systems must be updated or modernized to facilitate timely access to personnel data; again a possibly costly venture.

The Committee's research into relocations sought to identify the relevant issues for both employers and employees. The respondents from employers consulted supported many of the points raised in the Paper, particularly the financial difficulties experienced as a result of the necessity to relocate employees. The response rate of employee groups consulted is insufficient to validate the accuracy of the issues raised in the Discussion Paper from the employee's perspective.

In the Committee's initial consultations with employee groups, they had been strong advocates of the need for research regarding relocation. Whether the low rate of response regarding the research paper means that there is nothing more which can be added, or that employee interests have been met, cannot be determined although the latter conclusion would seem suspect.

Some conclusions are nonetheless possible. Organizations who appear to be successful at balancing their needs and those of employees in dealing with relocations have the following characteristics:

- a) They affirm the importance of relocations in meeting their goals or mandate and support this activity through appropriate funding;
- b) They monitor and review personnel management policies and practices to ensure that only necessary relocations take place whether for operational or developmental reasons;
- c) Their relocation program allows for flexibility in dealing with employee relocation needs;
- d) Their employees recognize the financial burden of relocation services and accept compensation for reasonable and actual expenses;
- e) Communication and cooperation exists between employers and employees regarding relocation services to ensure that planning incorporates strategies for identifying, monitoring and implementing new services to meet changing needs; and
- f) Social considerations are addressed in the relocation services available.

A consultation process based on Discussion Papers such as the one on Relocation is essential for the discussion and communication on human resource issues in policing.