

January 24, 2006

Consolidated Human Resource Services Sector
Agriculture Food & Rural Initiatives, Conservation
Water Stewardship, and Intergovernmental Affairs & Trade
1007 Century Street
Winnipeg MB R3H 0W4

Attention: Craig McGregor, Director

Dear Mr. McGregor:

RE: Environment Officer Series Review – Classification Specifications and Process

This letter is written on behalf of the membership of the Manitoba Environment Officers Association (MEOA) relative to the recent classification specifications developed by your sector and pursuant to the recent Environment Officer Series Review. The MEOA has serious concerns regarding the potential negative impact of this review on staff wages, morale and the capability to adequately deliver Environment programs in the Province. Further, our organization is deeply disappointed in the obvious lack of transparency and compassion displayed by Human Resources in the review process. Some of the specific concerns of the MEOA are as follows:

- The method of notification was certainly not transparent and open as expected pursuant to earlier memos received by staff indicating the implementation process. Staff was advised by your section that upon approval from Treasury Board meetings would be scheduled with Directors and staff to present the updated classification specifications for the series and the implementation process. These meetings never occurred as promised. Instead Environment Officers were notified of their classification via letters the week of December 12, 2005. The timeliness of notification was most inappropriate. For many Environment Officers receiving a declassification letter two weeks before Christmas, at a well documented stressful time of the year only exacerbates the demoralization of staff and reinforces the lack of respect for employees.
- The new EO3 classification specification appears to be an attempt to fit an existing and workable position description for a regional operations specialist into one that does not recognize technical expertise, but relies only on supervision. Not only does this show a failure to understand the pressing need for field specialists but also, quite literally, cuts off any potential for career advancement by Environment Officer 2 candidates in the regions. Previous memos state that the intent of the review is to “*update the Environment Officer Series to better reflect the current organization*”. The new requirement for a regional operations Environment Officer 3 to supervise in our opinion does not fit the Environment Officer 3 Series which has more technical positions relying on field specialists.

- Regrettably the new Environment Officer specifications appear to have completely ignored a recent Civil Service Appeal Board decision regarding Environment Officer 2 and Environment Officer 3 field duties (October, 2004). The ruling confirmed that the specialist duties performed by a regional operations specialist were in fact, Environment Officer 3 level duties consistent with the general intent of an Environment Officer 3 and not an Environment Officer 2. The Environment Officer review and subsequent slotting seems to show an unfortunate lack of understanding of the level of duties, responsibilities and liabilities of Environment Officers in the field. Even though the working committee had some Environment Officers there was never an opportunity for the Environment Officers as a group to discuss the Environment Officer Series review, nor were there individual interviews to confirm/explain the job descriptions requested from employees in July 2004.
- Last but not the least of our concerns is the downgrading of several officers from the Environment Officer 3 level to Environment Officer 2, significantly changing of duties of others and rearrangement of supervisory duties for some Officers to allow retention of an Environment Officer 3 level. These decisions not only ignore the expertise of the senior individuals affected but indicate that the process involved is not consistent and certainly not a fair process.

We would once again like to express our concern about the lack of a fair, transparent Environment Officer Series review process and the debilitating consequences of the slotting and implementing of the new specifications on employees, their career paths and the future ability to adequately deliver Environment Programs in the Province of Manitoba. We request that you review the process/implementation in light of the stated Principles in Human Resource Management: merit, fairness, diversity, equity, reasonableness, transparency, natural justice and public interest.

Yours truly,

Original signed by

Richard Rentz, P. Eng.
President, MEOA

c: Bill Comstock, MGEU