

to work in partnership with Revenue Canada (Customs) and the RCMP to improve the program. In cooperation with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the Western directorate experienced great success with its concurrent application process. The Edmonton office is piloting a service, in conjunction with Citizenship and Immigration, that allows new citizens to apply for both citizenship and passport at the same time. This will hopefully reduce operational expenses for both organizations, as much of the information needed for the two applications is the same. The call centre at the Surrey office provides information regarding the application process, improving the efficiency of services. In Vancouver, the pilot projects for IRIS involved training and testing on the passport issuance software and many improvements have been made as a result of pilot site employees' participation. And finally, the Western regions initiated "peer reviews" to identify best practices and improve operational procedures.

The *Ontario Region*, with offices in Brampton, Hamilton, Kitchener, London, North York, Scarborough, St. Catharines, Thunder Bay, Toronto and Windsor, reported issuing 496,600 passports, an increase of 11 percent over last year. The call centre received 15 percent more calls this year: 385,600 calls, of which 167,300 were answered by an operator.

PASSPORTS ISSUED BY REGION (in thousands)



Several initiatives were undertaken in order to provide more efficient service to the public. Clients are very appreciative of the 24 hour access to information that the automated telephone system provides. The introduction of debit/credit machines was very well received, with 30 percent of clients choosing this method of payment. Pickup and information only areas have been established in larger offices to provide quicker service and less waiting time. The provision of urgent service for specific situations has been extremely well received by passport applicants.

Many initiatives directed at providing better information to the public have been implemented. These include better signage about passport requirements, special programs with community groups and participation in travel, bridal shows, outreach programs and other special programs, which provided greater services to the public and explain the processes and requirements. Several technological improvements were undertaken, including the pilot of the IRIS project and desktop software including Windows 95.