

Ensuring that the Canadian passport remains a trusted travel document is an important aspect of the Passport Office's work. The Passport Office constantly seeks to enhance the integrity and security of Canadian passports through improved technology. Systems introduced in previous years have been supplemented this year in anticipation of enabling future applicants to use their current passport as proof of citizenship when applying for a new one. Until the Passport Office can ensure this will not jeopardize the security of the passport and weaken its value to Canadians, the current requirements remain in place.

Negotiations with Canada Post Corporation led to enhanced passport delivery through the mail. Canada Post Corporation now guarantees delivery within two working days and can trace all passports and related documents as they pass through the mail processing system. This system includes the security feature of requiring a signature from the receiving party.

The Passport Office is concerned about the environment and is exploring the use of recycled paper for application forms. The expanded use of personal computers is expected to reduce the number of preprinted form letters, thereby further reducing paper consumption.

Bilingual service is available at Passport Offices across Canada. This year, cash register receipts issued in all offices were revised to conform with the Official Languages Policy.

To make Canadians aware of how the Passport Office can be of service to them, directors and managers assist the public by participating in travel shows, by appearing as guests on radio and television shows, by providing passport information for newspaper articles and by developing and presenting briefings for travel agent training seminars on request.

In November 1990, a Consular Awareness program was approved by the Minister. The Passport Office represents the Department in Canada and has been actively participating on the working group of this project. The purposes of the Consular Awareness program are to:

- inform Canadians about the range of services offered by External Affairs and International Trade Canada;
- help Canadians avoid difficulties when abroad;
- generate realistic expectations of consular services;
- enhance the image of the Department by drawing attention to the quality of the consular program; and
- recognize the importance of consular activities in Canada's foreign service.

The Passport Office participated in the Department's "Consular Awareness Week" in January 1991. A media tour across Canada, which was delayed by the Gulf War, will be launched officially in Vancouver in 1991-92.

Some of these initiatives have significantly changed operations. Others have had a less dramatic impact. All, however, have the common goal of making it easier for Canadians to receive prompt services and a secure, reliable passport.

The Gulf War

The Passport Office was significantly affected by the war in the Persian Gulf. Consular officers were in frequent contact with the Passport Office to obtain guidance on passport matters for persons requiring assistance in leaving Kuwait and Iraq. Security measures to protect passport-issuing materials, equipment and personal information were provided for the missions involved. The Passport Office met the increased demand for supplies, particularly emergency passports, at the missions in the countries that would potentially be receiving the evacuees.