

For the common card technology project, specifications identified by the working group led by the Passport Office were subsequently adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as THE international standard for advanced technology cards used for international travel.

A second alliance was initiated in the past year, this time with Canada Post whereby they would act as receiving agents for the Passport Office. Applicants would apply in person at Canada Post, whose employees, trained by the Passport Office, would ensure all relevant documentation was included and was sent directly to us for entitlement and issuance. Two Ontario cities, Sudbury and Cornwall, were selected as pilot sites for this project which began in December 1997. So far, they have resulted in a significant reduction in direct mail-in applications from these two cities and an overall reduction in the turnaround time because of reduced errors in the applications. A new expedited service called FASTBACK was introduced at these sites, whereby applicants could have the passport delivered to the door in two days, for an extra charge. Over 25 percent of applicants who used Canada Post as agents took advantage of this service.

In areas of alternative service delivery, the Passport Office's security division developed a unique service: providing expert advice to other organizations on secure printing and design. While the first project involved advising PWGSC's banking and cash management sector, we were also able to provide effective security advice and guidance to PWGSC regarding design proposals for the next generation of cheques. Our security division is looking to work closely with other organizations, and provide services in all areas of security and secure printing.

Negotiations are underway with Justice Canada and the RCMP for the specific administrative practices required to confiscate passports of people fleeing their child support payments. The Passport Office is exploring procedures to refuse requests for passports. The Passport Office is also proud to say that it has continued to have a regular role in the "missing children" program, in cooperation with the RCMP. We have attempted to promote the program further through both our participation in conferences and our passport control lists. This program has also involved many other departments, police agencies, international bodies and non-government organizations. Also in cooperation with the RCMP, the Passport Office has strived to identify cases of fraud, and participate in the prosecution of those trying to obtain passports illegally.

Continued cooperation with DFAIT has resulted in improved communications, particularly with recent connectivity to COSMOS. We have also shared our expertise with the Department on studies regarding user fees and cost recovery, and the development of a new accountability structure.

In operation since 1995, the CANPASS program, jointly operated by the Passport Office and Revenue Canada (Customs), was officially turned over to them for full management. Revenue Canada (Customs) is also playing a role in a new program in the Eastern region: to expedite the process, urgent passports are delivered directly to the Revenue Canada (Customs) officials at airports, where they may be picked up by the applicant.