

# EASTERN EASTERN OPERATIONS

Eastern Operations is responsible for issuing travel documents in Quebec and the four Atlantic provinces. Passport applicants receive personalized service from sites in St. John's, Halifax, Fredericton, Jonquière, Sainte-Foy, Laval, Saint-Laurent and Montreal. In addition, clients throughout the region can obtain information via a call-in centre in Montreal.

During 1995-96, the region issued 328,857 passports, a productivity gain of 4.3 per cent over the previous year and a rise of four per cent compared to the Business Plan forecast.

The main event of the year was the dramatic leap in passport applications during the weeks leading up to the October referendum in Quebec. The number of applications during this period increased more than two-fold, with Montreal area offices bearing the brunt of the demand. The region immediately took measures to handle the influx while maintaining service standards. It redeployed staff to help out where needed, temporarily enlarged the Saint-Laurent site and added two extra sites (also temporary) to enable the Montreal office to deal with its overflow.

These measures could be quickly implemented because of the Passport Office's status as a Special Operating Agency. The success of the response was also due to staff's professionalism and the cooperation of other federal organizations. The pre-referendum rush resulted in many interview requests from the local, national and international press. Coverage of the region's handling of the situation was generally very favourable.

In 1995-96, Eastern Operations continued the work, begun last year, of improving its organizational structure. A streamlined system of management was introduced in the Montreal, Saint-Laurent and Halifax offices. Also, the Halifax office adopted the "full job concept", whereby employees perform all passport issuing tasks. As well, seasonal employment was introduced

at that office to provide it with additional flexibility to adjust to volume fluctuations.

To make people—especially those far from the regional offices—more aware of Passport Office services, the region organized shopping centre displays in Sydney, N.S., Moncton, N.B. and in the Saguenay-Lac Saint-Jean, Rivière-du-Loup and Rosemère regions of Quebec. In other promotional activities, the division participated in the Salon du Voyage de Québec and the annual meeting of the Alliance of Canadian Travel Associations (ACTA) - Atlantic region.

The Montreal and Laval offices hosted tours of its operations for leaders of passport organizations from the U.S.A., Australia and the U.K., who were on their way to attend a "four Country Passport Conference" held by the Passport Office in Hull.

Other highlights of the year were improvements made to the recruiting and training of passport examiners and special recognition of employee achievements. The staffs involved in responding to the pre-referendum rush received a citation for excellent service from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (FAIT). Regional director citations went to the Halifax office staff for innovation and for promotional activities, and to the Fredericton office for quality of service.