

the group undertakes quality assurance of Passport Office products. It also stands ready to provide advisory services to other departments that deal with documents which must adhere to high security standards.

In keeping with their mandate to deter passport fraud, representatives of the division testified as expert witnesses at a sentencing hearing in a case of travel document forgery. Their testimony contributed to the imposition of a severe sentence in the case.

In other initiatives, the division improved the training program for consular staff who produce travel doc-

uments abroad on behalf of the Passport Office. Training manuals were revised.

The division continued to implement the multi-year audit plan adopted in 1992-93. The plan calls for audits of local offices across the country and examines every aspect of their work—security, finances, human resources and information management, etc. To improve this process, the division revised the examination guide used in the evaluation exercise. As in previous years, this year's audit revealed that local offices operated effectively and provided excellent service to clients.

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Finance and Administration Directorate provides advice and support to managers of the Passport Office in matters concerning finance, administration, accommodations and telecommunications.

During the year, the Finance Section processed some 12,000 payment transactions and other accounting documents and prepared the financial statements and reports published in the Public Accounts of Canada. The section also reviewed the Passport Office budgetary cycle and developed a new resource planning framework to be implemented in fiscal year 1996-97. The directorate supported implementation of the Technology Enhancement Plan by assisting in costing activities and in the preparation of a Treasury Board submission on the final phase of the plan.

An innovative project undertaken this year was a feasibility study into the use by clients of debit and credit cards to pay for Passport Office services. The Directorate conducted a survey of the Passport Office's clientele

across Canada and found that more than 51 per cent of them would prefer to pay their passport fees with such cards. The next steps taken were: a cost/benefit analysis, approval by management to implement the cards gradually and the establishment of an implementation team.

Another important initiative for 1995-96 was implementing a new organizational structure for the Finance and Administration Directorate. The new structure will better address the needs of the Passport Office management and will foster a greater team approach towards achieving corporate goals. As part of the reorganization, the Records Management Section was transferred from Finance and Administration to the Management Services Division. The reorganization will be finalized in 1996-97.

The Facilities and Telecommunications Group completed a number of projects over the year. The Group focused on the quality of the working environment by taking steps to improve air quality, safety and general well-being at Passport Office sites.