

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Mitchell Sharp, announced today the opening of a Regional Passport Office in Halifax, located at Suite 1210, Barrington Tower, Scotia Square. Another office will be opened within ten days in Edmonton at Suite 1210, Cambridge Building, 10024 Jasper Avenue, bringing to five the number of Regional Offices operating in major gateway cities for Canadians travelling abroad. Offices were opened in 1970 in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

The regional offices are designed to give better passport service to the public, particularly in emergency situations where applicants have sudden or unexpected travel plans, and to provide assistance to applicants who require advice on completing passport applications. As the regional offices are not equipped to process mailed applications, applicants who are unable to appear in person should mail their applications to the Passport Office in Ottawa using the addressed envelope provided with the Passport Application Forms which are available in all Post Offices in Canada.

The volume of international travel is increasing annually and the expansion of regional office passport service will assist the Passport Office in keeping abreast with the continuing demand for passports. It is expected that some 460,000 Canadians will apply this year -- an increase of 10% over 1971 -- and this will bring to almost two million the number of valid Canadian passports in circulation at the end of 1972.

The Regional Offices have proven popular with the Canadian travelling public and their contribution to the passport issuing programme has been significant. In 1971, the three Regional Offices in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver produced in excess of 150,000 passports representing about 37% of the total national volume. The Regional Offices' share will increase in 1972 both in terms of volume and percentage with the opening of the two new offices in Halifax and Edmonton.

The Passport Office points out that applicants should apply for their passports well in advance of departure dates. Before mailing their applications to the Passport Office, Ottawa, they should check their application carefully to ensure that there is no delay due to errors or omissions. Among the most common errors which cause delays are lack of evidence of citizenship, missed questions, unqualified guarantors, the wrong kind of photographs and failure to enclose the required \$10.00 passport fee. Errors of this kind occur in more than a third of all the applications received by the Passport Office.