

On the surface, we must provide cost-effective and efficient services to each and every applicant, from the rushed business traveller, to the grief stricken, from the honeymooner, to the diplomat. From their perspective, the quicker the better. But with each and every passport, we must apply various procedures through a number of steps to ensure the safety of the individual and the country. Security, for example, involves verifying the identity of the applicant and the integrity of the supporting documentation, but it also means producing a highly secure document that reflects the traveller's identity accurately, and that can be recognized and accepted worldwide. The document itself must be of the highest quality and integrity, so as to be protected against illegal uses. It involves confidential and classified processes from the design stage right through to the printing stage. Without these steps, criminal activities would increase dramatically and bring danger to everyone's doorstep.

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*When passports are checked at the border, one thing that is considered by foreign customs is the security and quality of the entitlement process. The quality of Canadian passports and the integrity of the security and entitlement process are well known to foreign customs agents and Canadians are readily approved for entry abroad. This year, the Passport Office, in coordination with law enforcement and other departments, investigated 200 cases of passport abuse or misuse which were stopped at the entitlement process. These investigations have resulted in formal refusals of service and revocation of passports.*

With 28 offices across Canada, and services provided to remote areas, we need to be able to maintain secure information sharing systems, and the ability to review and process documentation across the country... a Canadian can expect the same quality of service from the Passport Office wherever he or she may live. At the same time, these services are expected to be efficient and cost-effective, and sometimes services must be provided over the weekend or within short periods of time. To fulfill our mandate, we often have to work closely and communicate with other governments and other departments to respond to security issues, or even have a passport waiting for the applicant at the airport. We provide these services to Canadians around the globe, and to missions abroad, in order to support Canadian interests.

It all starts with one application, and soon it ripples and spreads into so many domains and responsibilities, like a pebble that strikes the still surface of a pond. The impact of our services, like our clients, travels around the world.

This year, we provided 1,517,838 passports, and each passport issued had to be flawless.

The Passport Office issues the 24-page passport, the most commonly requested passport, as well as Diplomatic, Special, Emergency and 48-page regular passports, Certificates of Identity, and Refugee Travel Documents. The Passport Office is responsible for revoking, withholding, recovery and use of all of these documents, and provides guidance to missions issuing passports abroad. All of these matters and other issues relating to Canadian travel documents are supervised by the Passport Office, as defined by the Canadian Passport Order. We invest great pride, care and commitment in this process.

This year, 1997-98, was another year of change, of adaptation, and of overall improvement. The Passport Office was successful in many areas, and piloted many projects and initiatives, all aiming at five key sections. The first three are intricately interwoven: security,