

processes for easier authentication of identification and passports. Management of the Regional offices participated on the Councils of Senior Federal Officials in their provinces. The regional councils report directly to the Clerk of the Privy Council Office and the Secretary of the Treasury Board to provide policy input for government agenda. In the Western Region, our Director served as Chairperson of the Council for British Columbia and Alberta.

Other departments

To improve the speed with which we can process applications, improved partnerships have been established and reinforced this year with CIC, RCMP and Revenue Canada. Services were greatly improved for one of our major clients—the Department of National Defence.

Participation with Revenue Canada and CIC furthered the goals of machine-readable passport/identification documents and cards. The ultimate goal being an automated primary inspection line. The new passport card is expected to be functional in any frequent flyer system at Canadian and U.S. airports. Partnerships with these departments are leading to the improvement/development of a new breed of machine-readable travel documents, procedures and security specifications.

Four co-operative projects were initiated with Citizenship and Immigration Canada this year to improve services to the public.

First, the co-location pilot initiated plans for a common reception and potential front counter environment. While behind the scenes, each department will operate its distinct services, the initial contact with the public has many similarities. With shared front counter environments, extended service hours, bilingual services, improved information sharing and more comprehensive program information, greater efficiency could be achieved by both departments. A pilot of this initiative will be located in London, Ontario.

Second, the concurrent application pilot, aimed at new Canadian citizens applying for passports, recognized that the information collected by both departments for new citizens and for passports is similar. Both departments will co-operate and co-ordinate application processing, with the hope of soon having one common application for both the Citizenship Certificate and the passport. These modifications streamline the process and are more cost-effective. Pilots will be implemented in Alberta and Nova Scotia.

Third, the shared services project will improve information sharing and joint operations. Telephone operators will respond to general non-case specific questions regarding both CIC and the Passport Office. Plans will be implemented at all call centres.

Fourth, the common card technology has achieved significant results, as mentioned earlier.

In addition, collaboration with CIC this year involved the issuance of Canadian passports during a Citizenship ceremony to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Citizenship Act. Additionally, a partnership was established with the RCMP to support the Missing Children's program—the Passport Office plan to take a greater role in this activity.

Continued achievements to the Technology Enhancement Plan were made easier by liaison with various officials of the Treasury Board Secretariat and DFAIT. By designing and developing various public counter models and by managing the required leasehold improvements for the pilot offices, service conditions were improved. There was also a clear improvement in communications with DFAIT and missions with the installation of a few Signet stations. Signet stations are stand-alone high-security computers, and were developed to improve co-ordination between the Passport Office and DFAIT.

Improvements in the delivery of passport services to DND were fulfilled this year. A new process was implemented in the Western Region. The Passport Office provided services onboard ships and examined 200 applications in 3.5 hours, reducing the amount of time greatly compared with normal services. Fees for services were administrated later, greatly reducing time lost by outgoing and incoming DND exercises. In addition, centrally, services and improvements were provided to DND, with concentration placed on co-ordinating changing volume demands to respond to their major downsizing exercises.

Continued annual participation in a Four Nations Conference (United Kingdom, United States, Australia and Canada) led to discussions regarding new security results and solutions. The conference was hosted by the United Kingdom. Next year, Canada and the U.S. will jointly host in Boston, Pittsburgh and Ottawa.

International relations and the U.S. connection

With increased government initiatives to improve trade and reduce trade barriers, accessible and easy travel for business is a high priority. Projects like machine-readable passports, improved communications