

Two other factors contributed to the rise in business volume. One was the increase in the number of Canadians travelling outside the country: 5.8 per cent more Canadians went overseas during 1995-96 than in the previous year, and 7.4 per cent more travelled to the United States for more than one night. The Open Skies Agreement between Canada and the U.S. boosted transborder air services resulting in more and more Canadians choosing to travel by air to the U.S. This in turn boosted demand for Passport Office services since Canadians have been encouraged to carry passports when travelling to the U.S.

A second factor affecting demand was the referendum in Quebec in October 1995. Passport Office sites in the province of Quebec, particularly those in the Montreal area, saw demand for Canadian passports soar by 130 per cent in the month leading up to the referendum.

Canadians are now more likely than ever before to hold passports. The data show that 22.6 per cent of Canadians currently have a passport compared with 18.6 per cent in 1990. The proportion of passport holders in the population has been rising steadily since 1982.

Of the 1,505,417 travel documents issued this year, 95.9 per cent were issued in Canada and 4.1 per cent abroad. This was in keeping with the Business Plan forecast.

PRODUCTIVITY

Historically, the productivity rate has been the most important efficiency indicator within the Passport Office. Each year the Office establishes productivity targets for the Agency as a whole and for each operational division. Both the Executive Committee and the Advisory Board approve these targets.

Senior management uses productivity targets to allocate resources, monitor efficiency and develop short-term and long-term objectives.

The productivity rate is defined as the number of travel documents issued per person-year. There are two variations of the rate: the first takes into account overhead and the second includes operations personnel only.

The productivity rate is influenced by the seasonal fluctuations in demand for passports. As most travel occurs in the last quarter of the fiscal year, more staff are required at that time to process applications.

In the 1995-96 fiscal year, the Passport Office produced 2,921 travel documents per person-year, an increase in productivity of 8.9 per cent over last year. This was the third year in a row that the Agency experienced a productivity gain. The rise in productivity coincided with a growth in demand of 7.8 per cent for Passport Office services.

The higher productivity was partly due to the rise in business volume but also to the prudent use of human resources. This was best demonstrated in the response to the rush for Canadian passports during the Quebec referendum. Staff were redeployed where needed and applications were screened to speed up interviews with examiners. These and other measures resulted in a productivity gain of 30.3 per cent over the same period last year.

Productivity gains by region were: 4.3 per cent for Eastern Operations, 3.7 per cent for Ontario Operations, 12.8 per cent for Western Operations and 10.8 per cent for Central Operations.

The Passport Office achieved its five-day service standard (five working days to process an application submitted in person) in 96.6 per cent of cases. The ten working day standard for mail submissions was reached 63 per cent of the time. This rate was achieved despite delays caused by two extraordinary events: the Quebec referendum and the implementation of the new consular fee. In the days leading up to the referendum in Quebec,