

**TECHNOLOGY AND COST-BENEFITS**

There is no question that increased automation makes everyone's job a little more efficient, and this year, many improvements were put in place, not simply for the sake of technology but because they are (or will be) efficient, effective and cost-beneficial. The ability to keep pace with technological developments will benefit the Passport Office and ensure that the operations can adapt.

Many of our projects have gone into the review and improvement stage: IRIS, common card technology, LAN/WAN and Records Management Automation, and many are being rolled out in the coming year. A link has now been established between Passport Office and DFAIT servers giving us access to the COSMOS and the departmental financial system. The forms program has proven to be a superior method of updating and improving application forms, and it produces a number of forms and designs. The telephone services continue to be a great success, and significantly reduce the strain on human and financial resources. The Computer Telephony Integration is ongoing, and there is a push towards more equipment, improved traffic capacity, training and a Call Centre management team. Other automated processes, such as the credit/debit machines, were almost immediately successful. The credit/debit card system was used in 30 percent of the payments, representing revenues of \$15 million over a 12-month period, and also resulted in a more secure office environment (less cash on hand). The design, configuration, prototyping and testing of PASSAP has just been completed. The new system, which goes live April 1st, 1998 promises to improve the access to information, accounting standards, and administrative and financial functions.

In addition to technological advances, the Passport Office continues to address strategic planning improvements. By understanding our business, we can improve our operations. This year, there was a revised planning function that was far more business-efficient. The four strategic imperatives, i.e. alternative service delivery, providing management with skills, exploiting technology, and re-engineering the application process, will all lead to improved cost-effectiveness.

Improvements in technology affect our operations at headquarters, in the regions, and abroad. They will no doubt improve our cost-effectiveness, and when IRIS reaches full implementation, we will be prepared for the increase in international travel over the next decade. What does the future hold? Electronic application forms? Secure home access to passport services? Or perhaps just virtual travel...

**SUMMARY**

While we have taken many steps to improving our cost-effectiveness, there are still many tasks and goals to pursue, including the rollout of technological advances and the continued evaluation of our core competencies. This past year the SOA model has proven to be a cost-effective and business oriented model. The world is getting smaller, travel needs are growing, and we're always trying to map out the new world.