

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 such as the production of machine-readable passports, improved communications (information systems, LAN and WAN connections), the reduction of overlapping activities with Revenue Canada (Customs), and joint efforts with U.S. agencies are all aimed at making travel easier. Greater cooperation, joint security strategies, and cost-shared initiatives facilitate access for the business person and the occasional traveller alike. Every day, we take steps to make trouble-free access a reality.

The Passport Office also hosted the Four Nations Conference and provided expert advice and shared best practices, as well as presenting a paper and conducting a workshop on alternative service delivery at a Commonwealth Conference in South Africa. Passport Office employees were selected for postings with DFAIT in London, as well as Hong Kong and Paris, and their experience regarding passport issuance was shared and well-used.

The Passport Office organizes, leads and participates in working groups, projects and committees involving international bodies and foreign governments. This year the Passport Office addressed the International Standards Organization (ISO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) on how to intercept fraudulent travel documents as well as to promote the surrender of these documents to the country of origin. In February, ICAO adopted the Passport Office/Citizenship and Immigration specifications for travel cards using advanced technology (passport cards) as the international standard for such cards.

OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Successful alliances with provincial governments have resulted in expanded services. The project initiated in the Eastern Region, where clients could apply for birth certificates as well as passports in Quebec, has produced excellent results to date and continues to be successful since it was introduced last year.

In addition to travel shows, information booths, public promotions and meetings with new citizens, the Passport Office contributes greatly to the activities of other government organizations, charities and non-profit organizations. For instance, the Passport Office was recognized by United Way for its significant donations, as well as its participation in food drives, the Children's Wish Foundation, and other special events.

SUMMARY

The Passport Office achieved a number of its goals this year, and a few that were not planned for, while participating with other government and non-government organizations. This role grows every year, and will continue into the new millennium. With the increased emphasis on alternative service delivery models, more partnerships and joint efforts are expected, and perhaps will lead to even greater success. We must try to look at breaking down barriers and making joint programs the way of the future, opening new gates, new roads to better places.