

2.6 BENEFITS

2.6.1 The business of the Department is the acquisition and processing of information, defined in its broadest sense - this includes information about Canada which is distributed to target groups outside Canada and information about external developments which is distributed to senior policy makers and the Department's other clients within Canada. The achievement of the Department's objectives is dependent on complete, timely and accurate information reaching the right person at the right time no matter where the recipient is. To do this it has developed systems capable of collecting information, of evaluating it and of distributing it, not only in Canada but also abroad. They are characterized by speed and by flexibility and enable the Department to react to the conditions of unpredictability that so frequently mark international events. There are, however, limits to their effectiveness because although some elements are supported by modern technology, others are completely dependent on manual methods. Enough has been learned about recent technological developments to indicate that they could offer potentially major benefits to increase the performance of these systems with consequent advantages for the productivity of employees and for the Department's efficiency.

2.6.2 The basic thrust of this Plan is that the Department needs to introduce modern technology more widely in support of its operations, in order that it can cope with a workload that is expected to continue to increase if current trends continue. (By way of example, in each of the last two fiscal years the volume of outgoing mail has increased by over 20%, while the volume of incoming telegraphic traffic increased by over 10% in 1983, and by 8.5% in 1984).

2.6.3 It is difficult to quantify the benefits that would result from the projects planned. Two of them - the Import Permit Processing System and the Computer Assisted Immigration Processing System (CAIPS) - are expected to yield tangible savings in human resources. The Department's office automation projects are being evaluated by a consultant with the express objective of identifying the benefit/cost of similar technology. The benefits expected from such projects as the new Financial Management System (FMS), a revitalized Personnel Management Information System (PMIS) or a new system to manage procurement and shipment of materiel to Posts abroad cannot at this point be estimated in other than general terms of increased efficiency and production. It will be possible to estimate benefits and possible savings more accurately when the studies envisaged have been completed. It is expected that these projects will contribute to improvements in the Department's effectiveness, and in helping to avoid some future costs.

2.7 MAJOR NEW PROJECTS

2.7.1 PRIORITY ONE: CORPORATE PLANNING AND DEPARTMENTAL ADMINISTRATION

The existing resource systems supporting the Department's Financial and Personnel systems will be redesigned and a comprehensive system for physical and materiel resource management will be designed. The data from each of these systems must satisfy not only individual bureau needs, but also those of Corporate Management by identifying resources consumed by organizational components of the Departmental program structure as defined in the Operational Planning Framework (OPF).

The Financial System (FMS) is five years old and it must be fully aligned with the OPF in order that the new reporting requirements of Departmental Management can be met. A user requirements study is underway and should be completed by April 1985. Improvements are required in the Personnel Systems. Personnel data now is often incomplete, limiting its usefulness. Some progress has been made in developing systems for the management of the Department's extensive inventory of physical and materiel resources, but much more has to be done if a modern system to track the progress of major capital projects is to be installed and if a more efficient means is to be developed to keep an adequate record of materiel