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The year 1995-96 was a year full of preparations for change. The most significant change is the increasing move towards the use of technology to become a more efficient and effective organization. Early in the year, we moved to the Windows environment as part of our office automation and in preparation for the implementation of the Technology Enhancement Plan and the new OSCAR system. As important an impact of technology has had on our services and how we provide them, it has an equally important impact on our people. The introduction of new software and technology, for many, can be stressful and disruptive. For this reason, we developed a Transitional Human Resources Plan to mitigate the effects of rapid technological change.

This increased use of technology will enhance service to Passport Office clients in two important ways. First, OSCAR will increase the efficiency of the passport issuance process by improving information capture, storage and retrieval while also increasing the security of the document. Second, OSCAR also allows for the possibility of an entirely new travel document — the Passport Card. The card is an electronic form of the passport that will enable Canada to participate in a joint border system with the United States. This cooperation will allow for rapid access to the two countries for frequent, low-risk travellers. The joint border system was recently piloted in Vancouver with successful results.

A national client satisfaction survey conducted this year showed that Canadians are generally very satisfied with the Passport Office's performance. We are pleased with such positive feedback and we will continue to build on our success by focussing on meeting client needs in an affordable and secure manner.

This year saw an unprecedented increase in the demand for passports. In fact, demand soared by more than 130% in the Montreal area for the month of October. Our staff reacted remarkably. They relocated from other offices and even established temporary locations to handle the extra workload. It was a tremendous example of dedication and teamwork and it was very much appreciated by management and clients alike.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Robert MacPhee, for his five years of dedicated service to the organization and wish him well in his new career in the private sector. He took pains to emphasize to me the impressive competence of Passport Office staff, and their dedications to the principles and practices of client service delivery. This report is impressive evidence of their success.

MICHAEL HUTTON - CEO