

Our clients' perception of our service is influenced by the things that affect them the most: the location and accessibility of the passport issuing offices; hours of operation; the competence, language proficiency, and professionalism of our staff; the time spent waiting to submit an application or pick up a passport; the turn-around time for mailed-in applications; and our overall accuracy.

A number of new initiatives this year have been directed at improving service. More offices have opened across the country to make it easier to visit the Passport Office in person. The issuing offices have been redesigned and redecorated with a common theme, so that they will be more appealing to employees and to the public.

The Passport Office has also introduced a toll-free telephone service which provides callers with information concerning eligibility requirements.

Rather than assuming we know what our clients want, the Passport Office is making a concerted effort to survey Canadians and

to respond to their suggestions. Where warranted, hours have been extended; and issuing offices can provide emergency service after hours, on statutory holidays, and on weekends. An effort is being made, through the use of new technology, to predict how long a wait clients will have in the office, and to notify them of the waiting time so that they know what to expect. Efforts are also being made to see that returning clients avoid a second wait in line.

A move to empowerment has enabled examiners to make decisions more readily, especially on matters that previously required consultation with a superior.

The Passport Office is constantly looking for new products and ways to improve service to Canadians. Through the Technology Enhancement Plan we are reengineering the issuance process.

Despite all these endeavours, the Passport Office manages to keep its costs low and its security among the best in the world. We think that's quite an achievement!