

Message from the CEO

P.4

This is the third year of our current four-year Strategic Plan (1997–1998 to 2000–2001) and the related Business Plan. Since its inception, we have learned that our Strategic Plan is a living document, which needs to be adapted to respond to the accelerating pace of change. This Report will reflect our efforts in this regard, as we attempt to maintain and improve the quality of our services and the efficiency of our processes while we lay the groundwork for future initiatives.

As the title “A Step Forward” suggests, the year 1998–99 was characterized not only by success in dealing with a number of formidable challenges but also by several seminal steps as we prepare to enter the new millennium. For instance, we have successfully piloted our new passport automated and delivery system, IRIS, and will begin full roll out early next year. While this application will allow the automation of current processes, it also provides the potential for the introduction of new and improved products and services in the future.

This year, a number of initiatives were successfully completed, others will continue, and some were abandoned. Our performance is not perfect. In facing many challenges and attempting to respond to them all at the same time, we imposed an overly ambitious burden on ourselves from which we have had to step back. For instance, employees’ contributions to a national strategic planning conference and the *Being the Best* exercise created a formidable reservoir of excellent projects and ideas. Recognizing the strain on existing resources, however, senior management reluctantly had to make some hard choices, and place a number of these projects and ideas on the back burner. It is clear, however,