

SPECIAL OPERATING AGENCY STATUS

In 1990, the Passport Office underwent a major transformation – it became a Special Operating Agency, one of the first five Special Operating Agencies set up by the Government of Canada to improve services to Canadians. As a Special Operating Agency, the Office places great emphasis on the use of sound business practices in the delivery of its services. While the Office operates like a private sector enterprise, it is a government institution, an agency of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

The Passport Office finances its operations entirely from the fees charged for passports and other travel documents and must generate sufficient revenues to meet expenditures. The Office operates under a revolving fund which is a non-lapsing authority from Parliament to make payments for operational expenditures, capital acquisitions and temporary financing of deficits up to \$4 million. The fund is authorized to carry forward surplus revenue to offset future shortfall. To date, the accumulated surplus stands at \$32.4 million.

As a Special Operating Agency, the Passport Office has greater management flexibility to achieve results than it would as part of a government department. In exchange for its increased autonomy, the Office is accountable for meeting high performance standards.

To reinforce the business-like nature of its operations, the Passport Office has an advisory board with membership drawn from other federal departments as well as the private sector. In the past, the role of the Board was to provide strategic advice to the Passport Office and to review and recommend for approval by the Chief Executive Officer and the Deputy Minister the corporate documents of the Agency. We are currently re-evaluating the terms of reference of the Advisory Board in order to better incorporate business-like practices and address stakeholders interests. During this period of re-evaluation, the Board has suspended its meetings. Normally, the Board meets twice a year and consists of seven members including representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, other government departments and agencies, other Special Operating Agencies and the airline and travel industry. The Passport Office publishes four major corporate documents: the Framework Document, the Strategic Plan, the Business Plan and the Annual Report. These documents are essential management tools used in the development and implementation of the long-term strategies and the short-term business objectives of the Office and in the evaluation of its performance.

The Framework Document is the Charter of the Agency and sets out the responsibility and accountability framework of the Office. It is revised every three years to reflect developments. The current Framework Document was last revised in 1994.

The Strategic Plan outlines the long-term objectives and strategies of the Office. The current Plan, completed in 1992-93, charts the direction of the Passport Office until the end of the 1996-97 fiscal year.

The Business Plan identifies the Office's business goals and objectives for the next fiscal year, outlines the strategies for achieving them and forecasts required resources.

The Agency's Annual Report evaluates its major activities and accounts for its financial performance in the preceding fiscal year.