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CANADIANS SEEK PASSPORTS IN RECORD NUMBERS

The Department of External Affairs announced today that the demand for passport services is continuing at an unprecedented level and based on the volume for the first six months of this year, the million issue mark is expected to be reached for the first time in 1985-86. That means one of every twenty-six Canadians will have obtained a passport by the end of this fiscal year and 4,500,000 valid Canadian passports will be in circulation. An official of the Passport Office said that the volume of passport issues started to increase significantly in 1982-83 with annual increases averaging 15% since then.

The sustained high level of volume is attributed to the strong economy, the strength of the Canadian dollar in relation to European currencies in particular and availability of inexpensive airline fares.

Despite the substantial increase in business, the Passport Office has maintained a three to four day service at the eighteen regional passport offices across the country and a seven day service plus mailing time for applications posted to the Central Office in Hull. The Passport Office cautions Canadians, however, that passport demand is seasonal and begins to pick up dramatically in January of each year. With the unprecedented volume expected at that time, prospective applicants are advised to apply now in the off season when service is most convenient at the regional offices.

.../2

All Canadian passports issued in Canada are in the new machine readable format recommended by the International Civil Aviation Organization and Canada is the first country to convert completely to the new style travel document. The fee is still \$21.00.