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McDOUGALL ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO PASSPORT OFFICE OPERATIONS

The Secretary of State for External Affairs, the Honourable Barbara McDougall, today announced a package of security enhancement measures to the operations of the Passport Office. The amendments will strengthen the security and quality control of Canadian passports while maintaining the quality of service currently provided to Canadians.

The measures will be implemented over a two year period to allow for ongoing assessments of the effectiveness of new security measures and the overall impact on service to the public. Highlights of the package include: amendments to the list of persons eligible to sign applications as guarantors, increased personal appearance of applicants for passports, the opening of additional passport offices, retention of documentary evidence of citizenship while the applications are being processed, and a fee increase for Canadian passports and travel documents.

"The Passport Office continues to stress security as its highest priority. I am confident that the measures outlined today will protect the Canadian passport from possible fraudulent activities," Mrs. McDougall said. "The package balances security and service to the public while sustaining the international reputation of the Canadian passport."

Effective January 1, 1992 the cost of Canadian passports and Refugee Travel Documents will increase from \$25.00 to \$35.00, and Certificates of Identity for permanent residents wishing to travel abroad will rise from \$25.00 to \$75.00. A fee increase is necessary to offset the costs of Canadian passport services and these enhanced security measures. The last passport fee increase was January 1, 1988.

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AMENDMENTS TO THE PASSPORT OFFICE OPERATIONS AND FEE REGULATIONS

Backgrounder

An internal review of current Passport Office security practices was conducted to address the issue of false Canadian passports. The review identified the need for enhanced security measures to protect the integrity of the Canadian passport and to ensure continued safe travel for Canadians when abroad.

The amendments to the Passport Office operations will address current concerns and increase the security of the document. The security measures include improved verification techniques such as the retention of personal documents during processing and increased personal appearance, which will allow Passport Office staff to confirm information on the application and determine whether the applicant is bona fide. In addition, the guarantor list will be reviewed to remove those groups which are no longer relevant and to decrease the possibility of applicants being identified solely by business records.

In 1992, five passport offices will be opened in cities in British Columbia, Quebec and Ontario. The new offices will maintain the efficient level of service currently enjoyed by Canadians and offset the requirement for increased personal appearances of adult applicants.

The cost of a five-year Canadian passport and a Refugee Travel Document will increase from the current fee of \$25.00 to \$35.00. The fee for a Certificate of Identity, required for permanent residents travelling abroad, will rise from \$25.00 to \$75.00. The fee increases are based on full cost recovery of the issuance of passports and travel documents. In 1990-91, the Passport Office issued a total of approximately 6,500 Certificates of Identity and Refugee Travel Documents, and 1.2 million passports.

The new fee is competitive when compared with that of five-year passports for other countries. Some examples (in C\$) include: Japan, \$115.00; Mexico, \$60.00; and France, \$70.00. The United States charges \$65.00 (US\$) for a 10-year passport.

The implementation includes ongoing review by the Passport Office of the results of the security measures to determine the overall impact on the general public, and the effectiveness of the modifications in strengthening the process of the issuance of passports.