



House of Commons
CANADA

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

OGGO • NUMBER 038 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Thursday, February 22, 2007

Chair

The Honourable Diane Marleau

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:

<http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

Thursday, February 22, 2007

• (1535)

[English]

The Chair (Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.)): I'll call the meeting to order, and I will welcome people from the passport office.

Monsieur Cossette, perhaps you could introduce the people who are with you. You know the general way things go. We give you a few minutes to make a statement, and then we ask questions and go from there.

Monsieur Cossette.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Cossette (Chief Executive Officer, Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs): Thank you. Bonjour.

Good afternoon everybody.

Madam Chair, vice-chairs and committee members, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee to answer your questions about passport services.

Ms. Jody Thomas, Passport Canada's Chief Operating Officer, and Mr. Gary McDonald, Director General for Policy and Planning, are accompanying me today. They will also be able to answer your questions.

I will limit my opening remarks to three elements.

First, I will briefly explain the new security environment in which Passport Canada and passport agencies worldwide operate.

Second, I will review the current challenges we face regarding the provision of passport services to Canadians in light of the newer requirements imposed by the United States' Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI).

Third, I will conclude with a very brief outline of our plan of action to improve services to Canadians while strengthening the integrity and the security of Canada's travel documents.

[English]

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, there has been a significant increase in the threat posed by terrorist groups, against which Canada is not immune. Last September, enforcement agencies prevented a homegrown organization from causing mayhem in Toronto; and only a few days ago, media referred to the threats made by al-Qaeda against Canada's oil and gas facilities.

Criminal organizations involved in activities such as human trafficking, child pornography, and identity theft have long expanded beyond their national boundaries.

Passports, as a tool of the trade for terrorists and criminals alike, have become a hot commodity, each worth thousands of dollars on the international market.

In such an environment, the national passport is no longer an annex to your plane ticket. It has become the international document of choice to confirm the identity of individuals.

However, prior to 9/11, the role of a passport in terrorist activities was not well understood, and therefore Passport Canada was not a government priority. Since 2001, Passport Canada has been working to transform itself from a service-based organization issuing travel documents to an increasingly security-driven organization involved in identity authentication and domestic and international security measures.

In this context, and long before the Auditor General's report of 2005, Passport Canada had already contributed to a series of domestic and international initiatives designed to reinforce the integrity of the passport issuing process and of the document itself. These initiatives continue in conjunction with the implementation of an action plan that will address the concerns raised by the Auditor General in her recent follow-up report.

[Translation]

Canadians are travelling more and more, and are increasingly required to present official travel documents to cross international borders. Since 2001, the number of passports issued has increased from 2 million annually to a record high of 3.1 million in 2005.

Over the same period, while the cost of providing secure, world-class documents has risen, the fees charged to Canadians for passport services have remained relatively unchanged. As a Special Operating Agency that finances itself, Passport Canada does not receive funding from the budget through annual appropriations. In order to remain within the parameters provided by the current service fees, we must try for the right balance among the costs related to security, service and the other functions of the organization.

It was only on November 23, 2006 that the United States settled on the date of January 23, 2007, to implement the air travel requirement under the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. This prompted many Canadians to apply for a passport, just as our regular peak season for passport demand was starting, even though the land and sea implementation phase of WHTI is at least a year away.

The arrival of WHTI coincides with several factors that make the current situation very challenging for Passport Canada: a return of the cohort of Canadians who applied for a passport in the aftermath of 911, an ongoing increase in international trade, demographic changes, and our economic success, even more prevalent in western Canada.

[English]

Demand has been much higher than expected. Nationally, based on a model developed by the Conference Board of Canada, we anticipated a 6.6% increase over last year's record, and we planned to deal with the potential increase of 8%. In reality, the rate of increase nationwide currently exceeds 16% on an annual basis.

However, month over month the increase is even more dramatic. We recorded a 33% increase in November 2006 over 2005, 31% in December, and 30% in January. I'm talking about the rate of passport issuance. And if you look at demand for those three months, we're talking about a 50% increase month over month compared to last year. This is a key fact about passport services: demand is not constant throughout the year. Canadians apply during a peak season that extends from January to March. This year the season started in full force in early November.

Passport Canada has hired and trained a significant number of new employees, asked all available employees to work overtime, improved access by expanding its network of receiving agents, and streamlined its operations. These measures and others have resulted in an approximate 25% increase in its daily processing capacity. But the fact remains that Passport Canada, both the employees and the infrastructure, is overloaded with demand. Despite all measures taken, there is a backlog, and it continues to grow.

Our immediate objective is to stem the backlog, reduce service delays, and return to our service standards as quickly as possible. We think this can be achieved thanks to the dedication and hard work of Passport Canada employees, the integration of new staff, and further optimization of our processing methods.

We are also preparing to deal with the next surge in passport demand, which is expected to occur when the second phase of the western hemisphere travel initiative is implemented at the land and sea ports of entry, sometime between January 2008 and June 2009. In all these preparations, we will not jeopardize the integrity and security of the Canadian passport in the name of expediency.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Canadians are expecting their government to deliver quality services at a reasonable price. To meet these expectations, we are working on a four-pronged approach that should position Passport Canada next to the best service agencies in the world.

First, we need to simplify our policies and procedures pertaining to passport renewal. Most Canadians should be in a position to renew their passport without having to appear in person or mail their proof of citizenship and identity to Passport Canada. Such an improvement would lead to a significant reduction in line-ups at Passport Canada counters.

Second, we need to expand our reach closer to our clients through partnerships. This expansion would be done through partnerships with other agencies such as Service Canada, CRA or Canada Post.

Third, we need to automate most of our clerical functions and transfer those resources toward our core mandate that is the authentication of identity, and the protection of the passport and the integrity of the issuance process.

Finally, as we accrue savings through the first three components of the strategy, we need to invest significantly in new electronic systems and security features that would reinforce the quality of the passport.

[English]

Thank you, Madam Chair.

I welcome questions from the members.

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you for coming. Mr. Bonin wanted you to come. Others will put his questions for him.

You know that I am very aware of the challenges. I wonder how you are going to proceed, because you spoke of using Service Canada, and we understand that. I have been told that Service Canada needs to hire many people to do the work that we are doing. Their results will not be any better than ours.

The first question I want to put to you, because I am worried, has to do with emergency services. There are no emergency services anywhere to the north of Toronto or Ottawa, except in Thunder Bay, which is 16 hours from Sudbury by road or 10 hours from Sault Ste. Marie. There are four offices in Toronto. There are two offices here.

Do you not think that it could be important, on certain occasions, to have emergency services available? Due to human nature, urgent situations come up, and they can come up often. A mining town like ours has many business transactions with foreign countries. Many of us have to go all the way to Toronto to get a passport. It is really unfair to compel them to do this when they need a passport in a hurry. We no longer have an emergency service.

My office has been working with the community for years. I understand, and let me reassure you that you did an extraordinary job in facing those challenges, and I thank you for it. However, the only big problem is with emergency passports. Service Canada will not be able to handle them either.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: As you know, Madam Chair, our problem with the issuance of emergency passport has to do with infrastructure.

The only Passport Canada offices that can issue emergency passports are ones that have printing installations. Consequently, the only way to deliver emergency services in the same way that they are delivered in large urban centres, would be by opening offices with full installations in new locations.

We are very aware of the fact that these services are not available to the north of a certain line. As we are considering the extension or widening of services in the regions, we will have to take a close look at the geographic locations that could afford proper service to the northern territories as a whole.

● (1545)

[English]

The Chair: My problem is there are four processing stations in Toronto and two in Ottawa here, and absolutely nothing for thousands of miles. Maybe we could have one somewhere within a five-hour radius. I'm not just talking about Sudbury here. I'm talking about Timmins, which is three and a half hours north of Sudbury. I'm talking about Kirkland Lake, which is five hours—and so on, all of those. There are no emergency places for them to go except to Toronto or Ottawa. That's an extremely difficult thing. I asked the question because that, to me, is the big challenge.

You've made lots of promises, and things change all the time. I think you also have to think of service. Anyway, I will go to the list. I've reserved my role as chair of the committee, but this is a subject that's near and dear to my heart. I have two people in my office who work on this almost full-time and who certainly have been doing so for the last few months.

Monsieur Simard, go ahead, please.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Thank you very much, Madame Chair.

Thank you very much to our guests today.

I guess the chair was indicating what I want to talk about. I just want to start with a very positive note. Saint Boniface is in downtown Winnipeg, and when I speak to my staff on this, they are actually enamoured with the service they're getting out there. It is very efficient. As a matter of fact, last week there was a lady in the United States who had a heart attack. Her son didn't have a passport, and they got it for him the same day. So we are very impressed.

I guess the next question is why we don't have more of these offices, if it works well in Winnipeg, if it works well where they exist. We hear very positive things about the existing facilities. So is the option again to install these things where you have Service Canada? We also have one-stop shops that Service Canada started to establish in Manitoba, for instance.

[Translation]

It is a bilingual service centre.

[English]

Are you going to be able to provide those services coming out of these facilities in the near future?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: That's what we're looking at in terms of potential options for the future.

The issue with regard to opening new offices is both complex and simple. The simple side is that we are living within a specific financial envelope, which is provided through the fees—we call them—for passports, so any expansion has to be financed from within or it would lead to an increase for passports or to a need for an annual appropriation.

Hon. Raymond Simard: It would seem logical that if we're setting up Service Canada centres all over the country to provide certain services, you would just add that service to it. In terms of additional cost, it would be quite reasonable.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: That's why we're talking about expanding the service through partnerships. It would be difficult to explain how we would basically increase the infrastructure when, as you said, there are already federal facilities in some locations.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Right.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Either we co-locate with Service Canada, or we give them the mandate and the tools to do the job. Right now they don't have the tools to do the job—

Hon. Raymond Simard: But you could do it, and you're looking at that.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Yes.

The other thing we're looking at is modernizing our technology. Right now we do lots of things by hand, manually, so the transfer of information is not as easy as it should be. If we could transfer everything electronically, it wouldn't make much of a difference when the passport is printed, because 24-hour courier service could do the job. But right now, because we have to transfer the information manually, which means the documents themselves and everything, it takes much longer than people are willing to wait or are capable of waiting when it comes to express or urgent service.

Hon. Raymond Simard: If I can go to something a little bit less positive, I just want to identify three or four things that have been happening lately. Maybe you can tell me how you've been addressing these.

I called my office again today, and they were talking about the 1-800 number. People can't get through. It's been very frustrating. And I can understand the number of calls they're getting. People are filling out online applications and they're being kicked out when they send, which is very frustrating. Lineups outside our Winnipeg office have been between four and six hours. It was minus 37 degrees in Winnipeg last week, and people were lined up outside, if you can believe that.

I know there's a place the MPs can call. Sometimes you won't get your call back within 24 hours. I think you're obligated to call back within 24 hours. Well, in certain emergency cases, that's too late.

I wonder if you can explain how you're trying to resolve these four issues.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: I will ask Ms. Thomas, the chief operating officer, but I just want to give you, just in a second, a bit of context surrounding these issues.

On the 1-800 number, in November alone there were 17,000 calls. Passports online went from 1,000 applications a week to 15,000 applications a week. Hits on the website are at 31 million hits a month right now. We're the sixth most popular site in Canada when it comes to the Internet. It does not, obviously, solve the problem of access, but the infrastructure, as much as the people, is basically working to the maximum.

In terms of where we are going from here, do you want to expand on this?

• (1550)

Ms. Jody Thomas (Chief Operating Officer, Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs): For the 1-800 line, we've realized for a while that the capacity isn't what it should be. Movement of facilities within government and getting expanded facilities is not quick, but in five weeks our call centre in Montreal, which is our national call centre, is moving to a larger facility and we'll double capacity. We have people working two shifts every day to respond to calls, and we're working weekends. We are logging the calls as much as we can. We know that people are getting through at a rate of 22%. We know that's not good enough.

The capacity is what the capacity is. It's not a lack of people answering the phones; it's just not enough lines. That's being rapidly expanded.

Hon. Raymond Simard: This is a temporary thing, right?

Ms. Jody Thomas: This is temporary, yes. We will move to a new space in five weeks. We'll double capacity at that point. We're also looking at expanding our call centre here. Our service standard is that we respond to 90% of the calls, and we want to return to that.

Hon. Raymond Simard: When do you feel that you will be caught up?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Caught up on calls?

Hon. Raymond Simard: I mean caught up in terms of getting back to normal, if you will. These are not normal times, I would imagine.

Ms. Jody Thomas: No, they're not. Our demand right now for mail-in services is outstripping our capacity by four to one. And mail-in services are different from walk-in services because you can't shut the door; the mail keeps arriving. So if we have the capacity to issue 2,000 passports a day, working overtime, working our people as hard as we can, and respecting the laws that exist for things like overtime, we are hoping to get back to normal service more or less by March 31-mid-April. That's not for all lines of service, but for the majority.

We are taking a very tactical approach. We realize we have a service issue in the north. We are opening up Service Canada outlets as we speak. We hope to have 57 online before March 31. While it won't resolve the printing issue, it will resolve the access issue. So that those people can have a reasonable presumption that they will be served in our normal service standard, we are shifting our focus to what exists in the receiving agent program right now. As those receiving agents unfold for people in remote areas, they'll be able to get service within 20 days.

The lineups are very long at our walk-in offices. There's no doubt that people are getting passports within 10 to 12 days in our walk-in

offices, and urgent service is always available. Our goal is to have the majority of it back online more or less by March 31. Twenty days is our service standard for mail-in. If we get down to 22 or 23 by then, that will have been a major achievement.

In terms of passports online, our problem is bandwidth. With regard to Public Works and Government Services' ability to help us to respond, they didn't budget for it, and neither did we. Nobody forecasted demand like that. So that's being worked on as we speak. I don't have a finite answer on when it will be complete.

Hon. Raymond Simard: That's intriguing. I would have thought you would have been set up properly for that. The expectations weren't there that you would be hit this hard?

Ms. Jody Thomas: No.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Holy....

Ms. Jody Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: This is unprecedented.

Ms. Jody Thomas: It's unprecedented.

As for calls from the MPs' offices, right now we have about five calls for every agent, so it's about five times the normal volume. We are working overtime this week and next week, and the weekend after. There is significant blitzing. We are using everybody who is available to work within the Passport Canada organization to return those calls, to get that back to normal, because all these things—like calls and traces and people calling in and asking us to look for individual passports—take away from the bulk of the work that needs to move through. We're trying to stop the bleeding at this point, and we're not saying that we're resolving it perfectly, but what we want to do is be very tactical in our approach so that we can get to the bulk of the work.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Thank you.

[Translation]

The Chair: Ms. Thibault.

Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): First, I must state my comments from an MP's point of view. I will refer to a question by my colleague, Mr. Bonin. This is a practical question, and I will tell you about my personal situation.

It goes without saying that my employees are there to serve the voters. It is a part of their job and of mine as well. I have a budget for this purpose. This is basic.

Previously, I had one half of a person for dealing with passports and birth certificates. We also help people fill out their forms, this occurs very often in Quebec and also when dealing with foreign countries. We help them in every way we can. I imagine that my colleagues do that as well. Let me emphasize that I am speaking on my own behalf. I would not want you to think that I am speaking on behalf of others and I would not want others to speak on my behalf.

Thus, I had one half of a person-year and there was no problem. Currently, I have one and a half person-years. My riding office has a reasonable operational budget, but I have no budget to hire an employee and a half to deal with passports, a half person-year to deal with employment insurance, a half person-year for other miscellaneous things. I would have six assistants and I could no longer spend on anything else. I could no longer travel.

You might think that we are offering quality services because I am a federal member of Parliament. This is done in a non-partisan way and has nothing to do with my being a federalist or not. I am not a federalist. There are federal programs, and we offer the services.

But my co-workers and myself bear the brunt of all the criticism. I created a system. Thus, if they are not happy, we will move out and I will have them sign a brief letter that I will send to the minister. Thus, you can expect some correspondence. I really want to help, but I cannot do anything about the criticism. All I can do is repeat to them what your employees tell me. You know that they are doing their best. Unfortunately, that does not go very far.

With regard to the MP Desk—I am currently the MP for Rimouski-Neigette-Témiscouata—Les Basques—, we might just as well forget about it. It is not their fault. Perhaps they did not get any training. I do not want to call them incompetent, but they do mislead us with regard to the timelines and dates for the issuance of emergency passports, etc. It is easier to deal with competent people in the Quebec and Montreal regions than to use the MP Desk. I want you to know this. I will not identify any employees by name or by number. I simply want to tell you that this system really does not work.

You tried to answer the chair's question, and I understand that the same question is being asked thousands of kilometres from here, perhaps less so in eastern Quebec. I think that I can speak for my other colleagues from that region because I know them very well. In eastern Quebec, on the north and south shores, namely in the St. Lawrence estuary, something could be done so that people do not have to go all the way to Quebec. People from Gaspé have to drive for five, six, seven or eight hours to get a passport. In the winter, it is out of the question. It is useless.

Let us forget Post Canada, because even if you pay \$15, there are further problems. People try to be polite, they tell you that your photo is attractive, but it is not accepted, and the application is returned. I have observed this, among other things.

With regard to Service Canada, and now I am speaking on behalf of my riding and the neighbouring ridings, Service Canada is not at all prepared to do anything at all in this area, unless we give them the tools that they need, or recruit new personnel or whatever.

Now let me ask you my question. Ms. Thomas, you answered a few questions, but I was astounded to hear one of your answers

today. I understand that you said that you did not think that you were hit all that hard. I am very surprised, because you, or at least Mr. Cossette and your associates, were aware of the number of travellers from Quebec and Canada that go to the United States every winter, in addition to business travellers, etc. You had some idea of the number of people and of the time when this would happen. Moreover, the United States had been discussing this for a long time. It was a question of time. However, I was astounded when I heard you say that you had been taken by surprise.

What is your current backlog? What measures have you taken to make sure that applications are promptly dealt with? In my opinion, 60 days is too long.

• (1555)

Now let me deal with my colleague's question. If you receive a mail bag today, how long does it take for it to get opened? We understand that there is a backlog of mail bags.

Do you realize—and this was Mr. Bonin's question—that during that time, the \$85 for the federal government in the envelopes are not deposited in the bank?

Imagine if the employee in charge of the mail—I think that this must be a monumental task—opened the envelopes, took the cheques and the credit card payments to cash them in. I understand that you would get paid in advance, but I wonder if the clients would be happy with that. Thus, the money remains inactive. To complete Mr. Bonin's question, could you give us an idea of how much money is lying inactive in mail bags?

With my first question, I wanted to know why you told the clerk that you were available for only one hour.

• (1600)

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Let me answer the first question, Madam Chair.

We were asked to be present here for an hour.

Ms. Louise Thibault: All right, but we will be keeping you here for two hours.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: We said that we were available for one hour. If we had been invited for two hours, we would have spent two hours here.

Ms. Louise Thibault: All right, that is fine.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: We have no time limit.

The Chair: You can stay later than 4:30 p.m., because we requested more than one hour. We were told that you were available for only one hour.

Ms. Louise Thibault: It does not matter. We know that you are available for two hours.

The Chair: You are here.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: We were offered two periods of one hour each.

The Chair: You are here and you will answer all the questions that we have for you.

You can continue, we are interested.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Madam Chair, with regard to projections, they were made according to a model with a good track record. The projection for the year was 6.6%. We had prepared for 8%, but indeed, we did not expect a 16% increase over the previous year. And in no way did we expect a 50% increase for November, December and January.

We were expecting an increase because that is our peak season. We were not expecting such a large increase. No one can deny that no organization, in the private or the public sectors, is able to respond to such a sharp increase within such a short period of time.

With regard to the mail bags, there were some, in fact, that spent some time lying on the floor of the hallways of the head office, but this is no longer the case. We are gradually going through those bags. We are implementing a system for registering mail as soon as it arrives.

Ms. Louise Thibault: Do I have any time left?

The Chair: No. Your time is up, but we will get back to you.

Mr. Carrie.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Before I start, Madam Chair, I was just curious, if you could clarify for me—we're all subs in the committee today—

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I wasn't sure how you'd do it normally. I've never been in a committee where the chair starts off with an extremely long question and then it goes to—

The Chair: You may never have been on a committee where the chair was from the opposition and took this subject so much to heart. I rarely do that—

Mr. Colin Carrie: I appreciate the—

The Chair: —but I am the chair and I took the prerogative to ask those questions because passports are a very big issue where I'm from, and we've been working at it for a very long time.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I appreciate your passion, and I was curious—

The Chair: So if you'd like to, we'll go ahead with your questions.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I would, but I'd like to clarify beforehand with the clerk. Normally, how does the time go between—

The Chair: We allow seven minutes.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Is it seven minutes for the Liberals, seven minutes for the Bloc, seven minutes for the Conservatives—

The Chair: Yes, everybody.

Hon. Raymond Simard: And seven minutes for the New Democrats.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Yes, and seven minutes for the New Democrats.

Does your time count toward the Liberals?

The Chair: No. I have the discretion, believe me.

Hon. Raymond Simard: No, the chair has the discretion—absolutely, and always has.

Mr. Colin Carrie: I just wanted to clarify that. Thank you.

I would like to thank the witnesses very much for coming here today. I want to commend you on a job well done with the circumstances you're facing.

One of the things you talked about was capacity and efficiency. I was wondering, have you had the opportunity to do statistical analysis to find out how much of this problem is a temporary problem and how much you think is a permanent problem?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: It's difficult to come up with a trend because it has occurred over a very short period of time. If you looked until let's say 2002, we were issuing about 1.8 million to 2 million passports a year, and our capacity now is for about 2.8 million passports a year. Last year we were at 3.1 million, this year we may easily be at 3.6 million, and potentially next year at 4 million to 4.1 million. So there's a gap between the existing capacity and what we will need to deliver.

In terms of trends, the problem is they're not constant. As I said, in recent years we all noticed we will double the number of passports over a five- to six-year period. So we're trying to adapt to a certain extent and we are catching up. The passport office is an organization that, in all honesty, should have been modernized years ago. It didn't occur for all kinds of reasons, but given the fact that we have to work within a specific financial envelope, that's what we do.

We seriously believe the only way we can move forward in the medium term and long term is to automate lots of our functions, so we can accrue those savings and invest in services, expansion, and security features.

● (1605)

Mr. Colin Carrie: I know Canadians are very concerned about security issues. The Auditor General's audit reviewed several security aspects of Passport Canada's operations, and she noted in her report that

Passport Canada still has some major issues to resolve, particularly in the areas of security and identity verification. It faces a complex undertaking that will need the full cooperation of other government organizations at both the federal and the provincial and territorial levels.

In light of her comments, should Parliament be concerned that the hiring of so many new employees could lead to errors in passport approvals and security breaches?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: It's interesting that you raise the question, because that's a criticism we get all the time: "Why don't you hire people faster?"

We have to clear these people from a security standpoint. People handling passports, physically printing and so on and so forth, need security clearance. It's not as if we could hire a clerk from the street, put them in our room, and then have them process passports. So it takes longer than maybe it should, given the fact that these people require security clearance.

That's why, also, we are taking the time it takes to do the processing, the identification of documents, and so on and so forth. We're not skipping over steps because the volume is increasing. We understand that it is frustrating for Canadians, but after all, this is a document that guarantees your identity and confirms your identity in Canada, but moreover when you travel abroad. So it's extremely important for us to make sure the document keeps its good tradition and so on and so forth.

When it comes to the AG's report, the Auditor General has two main concerns. The first one, when it comes to security, is access to the system. We have an electronic system that gives access to lots of people, from the examiner processing the file, to potentially the administration officer doing the administrative issues. One of her concerns is the fact that too many people have access to all that information. We are in fact in the process of closing dormant files that are not active. We are also in the process of verifying on a monthly basis who has access to the system. If people don't need to have access to the system, we just basically remove their capacity to do so.

But above and beyond that, there's also the fact that very few people in practice have the capacity to get an application from the beginning and produce a passport at the end. Very few people have access to the bags, the electronic system, the security feature, and the passport itself. In theory, yes, it works, but in practice it doesn't work that way. I don't have access to all the buildings myself. So the functions are segregated in such a way that very few people can do the whole thing.

The second aspect of her concerns relates basically to authentication of the document itself, which has to be done with the provinces, and criteria that may prevent people from having a passport, having a criminal record and so on and so forth. The exchange of information among federal agencies and between the federal level and provinces hasn't been as good as it should. We're making significant progress on that front, with the signature of MOUs with the RCMP, CSIS, and so on and so forth. We're making also significant progress when it comes to the electronic capacity of exchanging information live, because the issue is not only to exchange information, it's to do it on time. Otherwise, it's useless to do it three weeks after the fact.

We recognize that it could go faster and be better, but slowly we're moving toward having the security features we need to deliver the documents we would like to deliver.

Mr. Colin Carrie: You mentioned worldwide agencies. Have you been working with other agencies worldwide to look at new technologies? There's talk of a possibility of a ten-year passport, which might solve a lot of this problem. Can you tell us how that's going, with talking with other agencies?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: In fact Mr. McDonald chairs a committee. It's the ICAO committee.

Gary, if you want to say a couple of words....

Mr. Gary McDonald (Director General for Policy and Planning, Passport Office, Department of Foreign Affairs): Yes, thank you.

For some years now we've been leading the effort to develop new international standards for passports. You may have heard of e-

passports, passports with an embedded chip. It's the new international standard for passports. It was adopted by the International Civil Aviation Organization in 2004. E-passports are now being rolled out by many countries around the world, and we've been a part of that. Actually, we've been a major part of developing those standards.

So yes, we work very closely with our colleagues in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the U.K. We meet regularly. We exchange information regularly with those colleagues on practices, not just security practices, but service practices as well. If you heard us talking, I think you would be surprised—or perhaps not—at the degree to which we all face the same challenges and the same issues when it comes to confirming individuals' identities, in great part because we come from societies that share similar values and have similar government infrastructures when it comes to the identity issue.

So perhaps it's a long answer to your question, but yes, absolutely, we do. I would say that we are among the world leaders when it comes to developing new technologies and developing particularly the standards around those technologies.

• (1610)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Are there some countries that have this technology with the chip right now?

Mr. Gary McDonald: Yes, absolutely.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Are we close to implementing something like that?

Mr. Gary McDonald: We're getting closer.

Obviously, as in all organizations, we've had to structure our requirements and initiatives, and we have to get a sequence to those initiatives. The AG's report from two years ago certainly gave us a list of immediate issues that we had to attend to.

Many countries have introduced the e-passport already. In large part, it became a priority for those countries, because they were required by the United States to be issuing e-passports by last fall in order to maintain their visa waiver status for tourists. So with that requirement imposed upon them, the priority to issue e-passports went straight to the top of their list.

We took a slightly different approach. It's not that it's not important; it is. But clearly we developed a detailed work plan based on the guidance that we received from the AG and our discussions with the AG.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Bevington.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thanks to the witnesses for coming out today.

Certainly every member of Parliament is concerned about this passport issue. It's created a great deal of work in our constituency offices, but in some respects it's changed.

I'd like you to outline the changes you've made about the way a member of Parliament's office...and your rationale for the changes that you made with the movement of the passport. It seemed that in about October or November of this year, we quit directing passports to Ottawa. A directive came that we weren't to do that. We were to move them on to Service Canada. Did that change come from you?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: No. In November there was a little seminar organized for all parliamentarians, in terms of the services provided and how to work with the Passport Canada MP service channel.

I did not attend the meeting. There may have been reference to the fact that Service Canada is also available, but not in lieu of the service provided by MPs.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Okay.

Many citizens coming from a northern riding in a rural and remote area have a great deal of difficulty with passport requirements, even regarding passport pictures. It has turned out to be a problem for many of our people. It adds considerable expense, and it's something that perhaps Passport Canada could look at in terms of a Service Canada centre, particularly in Yellowknife, or if you're going to open one in Inuvik. If you had photographic equipment there, it would guarantee that the photographs would be of sufficient quality to make the passport application work. That would be very useful.

In many cases I've had people with dual citizenship come to me and say, "I sent my passport from Yellowknife to England, and I sent one in to the Canadian office at the same time. The one from England came back in two weeks, and the Canadian one took considerably longer." I wonder if in some respects we can look at other countries to find out how to streamline our mail services to ensure that these things are working in a correct fashion.

I'm looking at your projection here and your target for mail delivery, and I can't really say that I've seen those results at all. That goes before your particular ramp-up of passports in the last while. So I'd say that we really need to look at how the mail service is working to ensure that people in rural and remote communities have better access, more guaranteed access, because it's very difficult for them.

I've had the situation where people have to take an airplane to a passport centre in order to get their passport to meet up with their obligations. They could be involved in better planning, and that might help them, but that's not always the opportunity they have. I'm sure you've heard this a hundred times.

Something really has to be done for rural and remote communities across the country to smooth out the system and to ensure that in each post office in the country, for example, there is a very clear understanding of the nature of passport requirements in very plain English, with very good displays, which would allow people to make sure that when they fill out the passport application, they're doing it correctly, and that language and the understanding of technology is not as much of a problem as it is now.

Those are some of the things that maybe you'd want to comment on.

• (1615)

Ms. Jody Thomas: Well, you're right. Access is a problem in the north, and we are trying to improve it through the Service Canada

outlets. That solves only part of the problem. We're aware of that, and we're looking at how we're going to provide emergency service.

What we have done and what we are doing to improve the mail services, the surge of volume notwithstanding, is that we are committed to opening the mail within 24 hours of its arrival. That's been going on for about three weeks.

We are pre-screening those files and rejecting upfront the incomplete applications or the ones where the documents required aren't there or the photos are clearly unacceptable. That's about 30% of the intake.

So it was frustrating for people before the pre-screening was occurring, because their mail would sit there—there's no doubt—and then it would be rejected at some point. We clearly saw, right away, that wasn't acceptable. So we are rejecting mail within 24 hours of its arrival, and that's 30% of our applicants.

Another 14% to 16% of those are rejected because there are problems and difficulties with the form, which clearly indicates to us that we have to revamp the form. So there's a project under way to do that. It sounds simple, but it's not really that simple an undertaking to change a federal government form. We're working on it.

It's also clear that our photo standards, our tolerance for accepting photos, is too strict. So we are revising our standards for photos and expanding the tolerances now and changing how we're approaching our training. Our employees are very dedicated to making sure that we maintain high security standards. They follow the rule of the law in terms of the policy we've put in place. That's what they should do. The policy is too strict and the approach is too strict, so we're changing that to expand the tolerances for accepting photos.

There are a number of things under way to try to improve the quality of service and the immediacy with which people hear that they have a problem. That's going to evolve. It started about three weeks ago. It's going to be an evolving effort as we get through this backlog of mail that we have.

But you're right in your observations, and we are addressing all of them.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Thank you, Madame Chair.

The passport services are self-financing. Everyone knew you were facing a surge. How did you go about financing the additional resources that were required?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: That's an interesting question, because that's the difficulty we have with the forecast. The forecast is useful to estimate how many passports we may issue on an annual basis, hence how much money will be available.

What we did was build our expenditure forecast on 8%, not the 6.6% that we were forecasting. We have a buffer. We have a reserve. We build, basically, a capacity through the reserve. But as the passports started coming in, we knew just by the volume that there would be money available to pay for extra capacity. Now that we know very well the size of the increase, it's possible for us to calculate how much more money we have available than we would normally have.

The issue we have is that, on a cash basis, on an annual basis, we either break even or we're a little bit higher. But if you look on an accrual basis, over time, we're in the red, in the sense that if we're talking about reinvesting in new infrastructure, in automation, in an IM/IT system, that's where we have the problem. We have difficulties accruing enough savings on an annual basis to pay for a long-term investment.

Right now, everything we're getting above and beyond what our baseline was is being spent on expanding the capacity we have to deliver the WHTI.

• (1620)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I guess, Mr. McDonald, that would be your purview. You do have long-range plans, and you must have some cost estimates for those plans. How do you imagine that will be paid for under this self-financing regime?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: There are two things. We're looking at what can be done from within in terms of accruing enough savings to reinvest.

One thing I have mentioned in my introductory remarks is the renewal process. If we were successful at streamlining our renewal process the way it's done in the U.K., for instance, we would probably reduce the number of people showing up at the passport office by 40% to 50% because there wouldn't be a requirement for them to come in person. So right there, there would be a decrease in the number of people working at counters, the number of hours of overtime, and so on and so forth. That's the first thing.

The second thing is that we're looking at alternating some of the clerical functions we're doing now. It would require a short-term investment, but we would accrue savings in the long term. That could be reinvested in security features.

That said, when we're talking about bigger programs, such as e-passport, and so on and so forth, we are discussing with the government the kind of financial model and framework we would require to deliver those larger initiatives. Those discussions continue.

That's part of the challenge to a certain extent. How do we save, from an operational standpoint, in the medium term to invest in the long term in security features and systems?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Going on to a different area, the Auditor General's report generally is a good one, and compared to most Auditor General reports on various government departments, you're to be congratulated. Now here comes the "but". Unfortunately, passports are part of our security regime, so an 80% report card or a 90% one isn't good enough.

I have a few questions around the whole security regime that don't seem to be addressed in the Auditor General's report. For instance,

what kind of inventory do you carry in terms of the materials required for a passport in your various offices and in embassies abroad?

Ms. Jody Thomas: In our embassies abroad, we have changed that process since 2005. They only carry what's called a temporary passport. It's a white book. It has eight pages and it's only valid for one year. We no longer have the blue regular passports.

Certainly they're valued on the market should any go missing, but none have. The white ones are worth significantly less. They are seen as being temporary documents and are accepted around the world. That has become a common practice for most passport-issuing countries.

In terms of our regional offices, we have an inventory system that allows them to carry generally a month to six weeks' worth of inventory, and there's a continual replenishment of inventory from the Canadian Bank Note Company, where the books are printed, to our regional offices.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Are inventory checks done every 24 hours?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Every day.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So it is every 24 hours. What kind of inventory loss have you had over the past number of years?

Ms. Jody Thomas: We've had no passport blanks lost since 2002.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: That's excellent. When a second passport is issued because someone has lost or destroyed a passport, how long is the timeframe before the initial passport is deactivated? I understand that there is a computer system that's tied in to most of the world these days. How long is it before that system is activated? What's the timeline?

Ms. Jody Thomas: It depends on when we're notified. It's 24 hours from the point when we're notified. It goes into our issuing system and it's uploaded to CPIC. CPIC is where it speaks to the world. It goes to the border through the Department of Citizenship and Immigration systems.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So 24 hours is the maximum.

• (1625)

Ms. Jody Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: And what is the minimum?

Ms. Jody Thomas: We upload it daily. It goes from our issuing system into CPIC daily. It's not a live transfer. We have to do an upload of data.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: So there's a 24-hour window of opportunity for someone who perhaps has stolen a passport.

Ms. Jody Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: There are organizations that were referenced at the beginning, in the opening statement. There's trafficking in people that takes place. There are criminal organizations that deal in passports, but there are also governments that have facilities not much worse than those of the Canadian Bank Note Company, and they themselves have had a past track record of producing these sorts of secure documents.

A lot of Canadians work and visit abroad. There are certain countries where it's a regular occurrence that if someone is going back to Canada within a week, their passports disappear. There's notification, and 24 hours before they're to leave, their passports reappear at the Canadian embassy. At the present time, is there any security regime that red-flags those or begins the process of replacing those with an alternate passport?

Ms. Jody Thomas: I'm not quite sure how to answer that question. Should a passport go missing, it's immediately deactivated and that passport can't be used. It is never reactivated. So should it show up again at the mission, it can't be reused by anybody and we've issued a duplicate passport to the bearer.

If the bearer hasn't reported it lost or stolen and it suddenly shows up, generally an investigation is opened. Any number of things can trigger an investigation. You do see patterns. We know parts of the world where there are patterns of passports being declared lost and citizens then coming in to get replacements. We work very closely with our partners in CBSA and the Department of Citizenship and Immigration who are posted abroad to resolve just those situations.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Preston.

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Thank you very much for coming today.

You've been very good at answering a lot of the questions I already had, but I'll try to strike out on some new ground.

First of all, again, thank you to the employees you have out in the offices. They're working yeomen's duty right now, doing more than maybe could be expected of them, and they've been a great help. However, I bet they're not being treated all that nicely in some of those six-hour lineups in minus 37 degree weather.

We had some notification. In 2005 the Auditor General put out a report talking about what a surge in business would be like under WHTI. We're talking now about where we're going to head and what we're trying to do. Where does the planning fault lie here? We didn't get ready. We're now getting ready. We know we're going to solve this, or it sure sounds like we are.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: I wouldn't say we were not ready. I would say we were not ready for a 35% to 50% increase over a three-month period, that's for sure.

The problem we have with the forecast is that it's an annual forecast. Also, we got caught this year, in that the wave that normally hits Passport Canada in January started in November. According to the numbers we have now, produced by the Conference Board of Canada, 25% applying for a passport now are applying because of next year's requirement to have a passport for land and sea transportation.

Mr. Joe Preston: I think we've probably done that. We've certainly sent people out to get ready now, for the next time.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: And they'll be ready next year, yes.

Mr. Joe Preston: In the Auditor General's report, if I'm not mistaken, I'm reading that she estimates that 40% of Canadians now hold a passport.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: It's a bit more than 42%.

Mr. Joe Preston: Where will we be at the end of this?

Mr. Gary McDonald: I believe we'll be approaching 46% or 47%.

Mr. Joe Preston: Is that the peak? Is that what we think?

Mr. Gary McDonald: It will continue to get higher.

Mr. Joe Preston: Will it be a standard piece of documentation that most Canadians will hold?

• (1630)

Mr. Gary McDonald: I think it's important to remember that when we were at 43% being passport holders, nearly 70% of Canadians who crossed the land border had a passport. Over 80% of Canadians who travelled had a passport. The percentage of passport holders doesn't necessarily reflect the percentage of Canadians who travel.

Mr. Joe Preston: Those who hold them use them a lot more.

Mr. Gary McDonald: Many don't travel. That's what our surveys and our work with the Conference Board have shown us.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: One factor we haven't been able to figure out yet remains a challenge for us. Some people are living in the U.S. and are travelling back to Canada to get their passport, and then they go back to the U.S. We have numbers, but we're not confident at all that those numbers are right. There is the expectation that next year, for instance, these people will cross the border, apply for a passport in Canada, and go back to the U.S.

Mr. Joe Preston: Let's also look at a couple of other things. You talked about November, December, January, and February being some pretty key months. You also talked about removing the renewal piece. If we can remove the renewal piece out of the offices, we're going to really lower the workload piece. Is there some intent to perhaps send people renewal notices and tell them to come in June, July, and August?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Two years ago we had a renewal pilot. Basically, through this pilot we invited a certain number of people to renew according to a streamlined process. Through that process, you don't have to come to the counter in person and you don't have to send your birth certificate and other identity documents, because we should have the means to do that without having to interface with the people.

Mr. Joe Preston: Yes, because you did it once, and I still have a passport.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Exactly: you've done it once, you had a passport, and so on.

We would basically like to try that renewal process again, with more people, to assess what it means in terms of re-engineering the way we do business. Out of 3.1 million passports issued last year, 84% of those were at the counter. People went to the counter, they didn't mail it in. If we could get 40% or 50% of these people away from the counter, we've solved at least the counter re-issues, and some of the savings from there could be used for expansion in places where we don't have facilities and access. It also facilitates the way Canadians would reapply for their passports.

Mr. Joe Preston: On the website, you mentioned 31 million hits. Over what period of time was that?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: That's monthly. For November, December, and January, it was about 30 million a month.

Mr. Joe Preston: Last time I checked, the population of Canada was very near that number. Are you suggesting that everybody in Canada is hitting your website once a month? That just seems spurious.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: It's two or three times. That's the number of hits. We're not talking about the number of transactions between us and the public.

Mr. Joe Preston: No, I understand, but it's still an amazing number of people hitting your website.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Yes. It's the same thing with passport online.

Mr. Joe Preston: What are they searching for? Can you tell by your website what people are doing at your website? It would be a great piece of information, if 31 million people are hitting your website. If you got a dollar from each of them....

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: They're checking up on where their application is.

Mr. Joe Preston: Great, but if that's what they're doing, it will certainly tell you—

The Chair: That's what they're doing.

Mr. Joe Preston: —how to construct your website better in the future, if you could tell why 31 million people are going there now. I recognize that may be multiple times for the same person, but it's just an incredible number of Canadians, when you figure out how many there are going to it.

Other countries are obviously having to deal also with the United States and their passport requirements. Mr. Bevington talked about people from England being able to get their passports maybe even at a quicker pace than we can, but how are other countries that have a lot of travel to the United States dealing with this issue, and what has it done to them?

I recognize we're the big neighbour and we're right next door, but let's take Mexico as an example. What has Mexico done?

[Translation]

Mr. Gérald Cossette: I do not know.

[English]

Mr. Gary McDonald: I'm sorry, I really have very little information about Mexico.

Mr. Joe Preston: Apparently they're not travelling to the United States with passports.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Gary McDonald: I'll avoid commenting on that, but citizens of Mexico need a visa to go to the United States as well. Unlike the visa-free travel that Canadians enjoy—passport-free travel, apart from air—it's a considerably different situation with Mexico.

Mr. Joe Preston: Okay.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Joe Preston: That's it?

The Chair: Yes, if you want.

[Translation]

Mr. Simard.

[English]

Hon. Raymond Simard: Madame Chair, I may be sharing my time with my colleague here.

I think my colleague covered what's going on in other countries.

One of my constituents called me this week and asked me why we don't issue them for ten years as opposed to five years. I told him I thought it's probably for security reasons, and maybe because security improves over a period of time and you wouldn't want to issue them for too long, but I told her I would check with you to see whether that's the reason, or whether it's just for us to make more money.

● (1635)

Mr. Gérald Cossette: No, it is.

Hon. Raymond Simard: It is for security reasons?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Yes. In fact lots of countries that are now issuing electronic passports are going back to five years.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Are they going back to five years because the security improves over a period of time?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: The thing is that if your passport lasts longer and it is being counterfeited, you have an issue. There's also the issue of facial recognition. As we move towards new technology —

Hon. Raymond Simard: And your age as well, sure. I had a lot more hair ten years ago. Say no more.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: From our standpoint, the five years is directly related to security.

Hon. Raymond Simard: I saw a show—perhaps it was *W-FIVE*—saying that the Canadian passport seems to be one of the most popular out there for terrorists and for people forging them. Obviously it's because Canadian citizens get through almost anywhere without a lot of resistance, but is it also because they're easy to forge, or not at all?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: No, it's really because—you're absolutely right—Canadians have easy access worldwide. Canada's a multi-cultural society, so it's normal to travel with a Canadian passport, regardless of your ethnic background and so on. It's for that reason and that reason only.

Hon. Raymond Simard: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I'll just follow up on that and some of my previous questioning. In fact, then, with Canadian passports some of our greatest security concerns should be potentially with other governments. Has there been any thought of informing Canadians when they travel abroad that, should their passports be taken from their physical possession for greater than, let's say, a 24- or 48-hour period, this needs to be reported back?

For instance, in countries such as Sudan and Syria, some of the countries I've traveled to, unfortunately you're put in a situation such that you have to hand over your passport, and it's not returned, sometimes, for several days. That has made me somewhat nervous.

Most recently I spoke with an individual, one of the Canadians working in Libya in their oil fields, and it's a regular occurrence there that in the hotels Canadians stay in, their passports disappear, only to reappear 24 or 48 hours before they're about to leave. Especially when there are patterns to these occurrences, that raises great concerns about whether or not there's another Borys Wrzesnewskyj with very different facial features out there travelling.

If there is no regime in place—and I'm not aware of one, or otherwise I would have had to report it—when do we expect we'd take that sort of security concern into account?

Ms. Jody Thomas: We would have to work with the Consular Affairs Bureau in the Department of Foreign Affairs on that. There are certainly travel warnings on the Department of Foreign Affairs website that identify countries where there are particular security concerns for Canadians. That's certainly something we can take up with the director general of Consular Affairs.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Will you report back to this committee to let us know what is being done about this issue?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Yes.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: What sort of timeframe will it be?

The Chair: How much time before we get an answer on that?

Ms. Jody Thomas: Do you mean an answer in terms of a regime's being in place, or just an answer to whether it exists?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Well, we know one really doesn't exist, so I assume there will be a little bit of a discussion. We know it won't be a set timeframe, but is it in fact at all being looked at? If not, why not? If it's now been red-flagged, how long before the issue would be addressed?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: In terms of putting the regime in place, we could do that as soon as possible. The issue is really to find the proper means to inform Canadians to secure their passport. It could be done as they enter those countries; it could be done, as you said, through a notice. It could be done through the little booklet that is issued with the passport, *Bon Voyage, But...*, but it could be done relatively quickly.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Great; let's get that report back here. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Monsieur Nadeau is next.

• (1640)

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): First, let me share a few minutes with my colleague.

Ms. Louise Thibault: I wanted to speak to Mr. Carrie, but he is leaving.

[English]

I'll tell you in English. I just wanted to tell you that when the chair was previously Mr. Benoit, who was one of your colleagues, he took the same—

An hon. member: I don't remember Mr. Benoit doing that.

The Chair: Your memory is faulty.

Ms. Louise Thibault: I just wanted to make sure that you understood.

[Translation]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: So the main reason why we are meeting with you today is the current backlog. It is good to hear various points of view from different colleagues regarding passports.

I would like to know how many Canadians and Quebecers among all the people whom you serve and who are Canadian citizens travel to the United States each year. Do you have statistics on this?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: I do not have them with me, but I presume that the Conference Board will take them into account when making their projection.

Mr. Gary McDonald: Absolutely. We receive statistics regarding this from Statistics Canada. Statistics Canada can give us the number of trips made by Canadians to the United States. As for the rest, it takes some calculation. As I just said, given the fact that 43% of the population has a passport, about 70% of Canadians who cross the land border have some kind of document. This is almost twice as many, but not quite.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: I do not want to be like a school teacher monitoring his students. A year ago, we learned from official sources that there would be a backlog. Moreover, this had been rumoured for at least two years if not more. Given your position, you must have heard about this well before last January 23. I have trouble understanding how the situation could have been unexpected. I presume that you cannot answer this question because we are facing a backlog right now.

That being said, in another vein, I read in the documents that there are some attempts to make the task easier. We understand that you will take the needed measures.

We also heard that you are in touch with Alberta and British Columbia with regard to birth data. You receive reports on birth statistics. Am I wrong about this? What is going on?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: This is a pilot project whereby the federal government wants to verify birth certificates electronically and on time. For instance, was the applicant really born at that time and place? Can the province or the Quebec government confirm the facts?

This is an attempt to develop a system for exchanging statistics of this kind throughout Canada.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: In other words, when I apply for a passport, how can you be sure that I was really born in Hawkesbury, Ontario?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: This is why we are asking for the—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: How do you go about it? I see that it takes you quite a while to get this information. Do you go to the nearest church rectory, or what?

Mr. Gary McDonald: It is a part of the process. This is one of the reasons why a guarantor is required, or a third person to confirm the applicant's identity.

Our officers are trained to verify documents. This is why we always require an original copy of the birth certificate or the certificate of citizenship. Our employees are trained to detect counterfeits—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Fine.

I only have five minutes.

I understand your point of view, but with the backlog that we have right now, which, I presume, will be eliminated sooner or later because we know from the statistics about how many Canadians go to the United States every year, will this kind of measure mean that backlogs of 50% will be a thing of the past and that we will be able to laugh about it?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: The problem is caused, among other things, by our limited capacity for verifying Canadians' identity.

• (1645)

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Yes, I agree.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: There are people who are doing nothing but that.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Fine, but is there not a mechanism developed by Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, or the organization responsible for Passport Canada, to deal specifically with that situation?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: There are three major difficulties that hinder the exchange of information. First, the provinces themselves and the federal government do not have the same legal regimes for sharing personal information.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: It is as if there were 10 different countries.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: That is the first difficulty.

The second deals with how the data are recorded. The computer systems are all different. Every province has its own system. The systems need to be standardized.

The third difficulty has to do with technological infrastructure. Do we want a national data bank? I do not think that—

Mr. Richard Nadeau: We understand the problems.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Yes.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Will there be solutions found, or will we always be bogged down in such complex situations?

At the end of the day, who pays the price? It is the young girl who needs to go to a competition in Moscow to represent Canada in some discipline. I'm giving you an example.

In my riding, we sent the forms in 29 days ahead. And I am talking about Gatineau. It is not far: there is a large Passport Canada office in Gatineau. In fact, people in my riding are always telling me not to say anything about it. But I understand them. It is complicated.

I had to wait 29 days. We have not yet received a positive answer. And this is 2007!

Given that situation, I do not understand why you do not have a concrete plan on how you are going to resolve the problem so that this does not become a running gag. In fact, it is not funny at all, especially when people are directly affected. Is there a plan, a timetable? Is Peter MacKay aware of something?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: We have a plan. We are pursuing two avenues: one is to resolve the short-term problem, that is, this year and next year, given the increase in demand. That is one thing.

There is also a longer-term plan to simplify renewal procedures and processes and to verify certain types of information.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: What do you mean by short term and medium term?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: The short term is under six months. The medium term is 18 months and the long term is over 18 months.

The difficulty is that there are certain aspects that we have no control over. If the provinces do not want to cooperate to exchange information, statistics, we have to negotiate. We cannot impose our will on them. There are limits.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Cossette.

Mr. Albrecht.

[English]

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Madam Chair, and my apologies to you and the other committee members for being late, but I know that this side was well cared for by the veterans on this side.

Hon. Raymond Simard: You weren't here. We were here.

The Chair: Mr. Preston once upon a time was on this committee—

Mr. Joe Preston: That's correct.

The Chair: —sitting on that side.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you for appearing.

I note that in about the middle of your remarks—which I didn't get to hear—you say that you're prepared to deal with the next surge of the passport demand. And then also you identify that you're not prepared to jeopardize integrity and security, and I'm sure all Canadians agree that we don't want that jeopardized.

One of the problems in terms of the backlog, in addition to the central backlog, is at the local level at which I hear stories of people lining up at four o'clock in the morning to be in line so that they can get their passports into the office. I noted in the Auditor General's report that there were no national directives given to local offices in terms of trying to speed up that process. She did point out that some of the local offices had applied some very innovative techniques to deal with that. And it would seem to me that it might be wise to have either national directives or, failing that, at least some sharing of best practices across some of the local offices as to how some have minimized the lineup situation.

Would you care to comment on that at all? Or maybe it's in process?

Ms. Jody Thomas: It's in process, and it's been done.

In the last three or four weeks, we've sent out a number of national directives based on the best practices of the most efficient offices. We are looking at ways now to ensure that the offices can respond to all the people and their lineups, whether they arrive at four in the morning or one in the afternoon. What we can't necessarily do is respond to people who arrive at 5:30 in the afternoon, because we're still clearing out people. The walk-in offices are, for the most part, serving all the people in their lines. What we're finding is that there's sort of a panic phenomenon, and people who will be travelling in June, July, and August are now lining up outside our offices to get passports. What we're doing is assuring them that they will get their passports by three weeks before their travel date and putting them in a BF system so that we can do what's waiting in the mail and the backlog in the interim. There is very much a panic situation. I don't think in most offices across the country right now there is a need to line up at three or four in the morning. We are serving people, and we're getting urgent passports out so people are meeting their travel dates.

• (1650)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

I want to make it clear that I'm certainly not complaining about my area. I'm served by a very efficient and effective office in Kitchener, so I hope you won't misunderstand that.

Could you also just comment briefly on the NEXUS cards or that whole process? Are you involved with that at all, or is that something that's outside of your jurisdiction?

Mr. Gary McDonald: It's been outside of our jurisdiction. It is a Canada Border Services Agency program for pre-approved travellers who can register and go through a background check. Once admitted to the NEXUS program, you're cleared, in fact, by both Canada and the U.S. border agencies. It does allow for the use of the NEXUS card as a travel document. You can also use the automated kiosks that I know are now being rolled out by CBSA, but it's not our program.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Would that also apply at the land crossings in the future?

Mr. Gary McDonald: Yes. There is a NEXUS land. I can't speak to how that is going to be rolled out across the country, but it does exist.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Thank you.

The Chair: You know, I've been an MP for over 18 years now, and my office has been facilitating passports for as long as I've been there. You all know that. There have been waves of challenges, I will call them. Every year, at least two or three times a year—you can almost count on them—my staff go crazy because the timing is off and people are upset. We've gone through this so many times. Every year I've heard the story from the passport office, that they're going to streamline; it's going to be better; they're going to do things differently; now we have more security.

Do you know something? I'm starting to believe that it's almost as if you want those challenges every year. You talk about having to stick within your budget. My understanding is that you only get \$62 allocated to Passport Canada for that \$87?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: That's correct.

The Chair: Okay.

Now you're talking about using Service Canada to facilitate passports, which is what we do at my office, which is fine. They're going to have to hire a whole bunch of people to do this, and this is outside your budget, of course. Wouldn't it make more sense for you to handle...and have a few more issuing offices so that you could serve these people rather than making them go through this fear?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Is that my time?

The Chair: It's mine.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: If I had only known.

The Chair: I ask you that because when I see an ad in the newspaper from our local Service Canada office looking for 30 part-time people to man a desk.... I know they're not just going to do passports, but I know they're going to do a lot of passports, and you know they're going to do a lot of passports in my area. Wouldn't it make more sense for you to put more effort into solving the problem in that area? It still costs money—whether it's from my office, through Service Canada, or from your budget, which may not be big enough. I don't know.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: But there are two issues, Madame Chair.

If we are successful with the renewal program, hopefully we'll see a significant decrease in people applying at the counter.

The Chair: You said that to me before, and people can't apply at the counter in my riding, so that doesn't change anything.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: No, but the thing is that across the system hopefully the savings that we will accrue by a definition of service at other counters could be transferred elsewhere in the system.

The problem with local offices is that we have no means of knowing whether or not.... We know if this office makes money and another office doesn't. We have to find a way across the system to locate the offices where the highest volumes—

The Chair: Is this about making money or is it about serving Canadians?

I'm asking this because it seems to me this is about making money. If it's about making money, we'll continue with the kinds of problems that we have.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: It is about remaining at least within the financial parameters we have.

Mr. Gary McDonald: Passport Canada is going to receive the revenue from 3.5 million passports, because that's approximately what we'll issue this year, perhaps 3.6 million. Whether we have one office, 30 offices, or 300 offices, we are going to receive the revenue from 3.5 million passports. What we do every year, and several times a year, is re-evaluate our service delivery network to determine that we can deliver the best service we can within the financial envelope that we have—and that envelope is 3.5 million passports times \$62. That's what we have to spend. And what we have to balance is the walk-in office versus our mail-in component versus working with partners like Canada Post and Service Canada. That's the balance we're trying to achieve.

Frankly, we can't open an office in every community in Canada. We simply do not have the funds. What we're trying to do, though, is to get that balance to give the best service that we can to all Canadians. I've been at Passport Canada for many years now, there is no doubt that serving Canadians in remote areas is one of our biggest challenges, and we admit that. But it's not simply a question of opening an office. Opening an office is an extremely expensive proposition.

We were asked earlier about security in our offices. It isn't just four walls and a building. Those offices are highly secure, with walk-in vaults, security systems in place. It isn't just a regular building that you just happen to buy. The fit-up is extremely expensive. So opening an office isn't simply going to Public Works and saying give us 12,000 square feet.

That's our struggle, as well, to find the appropriate balance to service all Canadians.

• (1655)

The Chair: I thank you for that response.

I will tell you what I was told once, though. I was told that it wasn't opening it that was the problem, it was closing it. So I'm never sure what I'm going to hear. I was told that by somebody from Passport Canada, but I'm sure.... Because I've been in the business for so long, I've had a lot of stories told to me.

I thought you were finished, Mr. Albrecht.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I was finished, but if I had known you were going to take up all my time—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Chair: This is a very touchy topic in my area, because we've had so many challenges.

Mr. Gary McDonald: Of course, and we agree.

The Chair: Are there any other questions that anybody wants to ask?

After Mr. Bonin wanted to ask you in, I wanted to be sure to ask a lot of questions.

Madame Thibault.

[Translation]

Ms. Louise Thibault: Would you be so good as to repeat the three difficulties that you described in your answer to my colleague? You mentioned, for example, access to provincial data because, if I understand correctly, the provinces and the 3 territories are 13 absolutely different entities. You cannot simply decide to exchange information.

What were the two others?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: There is the legal issue, the legal framework. The second is the way in which—

Ms. Louise Thibault: When you say "the legal framework," what does that mean?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: It means that each of the provinces has legislation on access to private information.

Ms. Louise Thibault: Fine. And the third?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: The second challenge is how the information itself is indexed. The way in which the data is recorded differs from one jurisdiction to another. To give you an example, Quebec has two birth certificates: one for people born in Quebec and one for people born outside Quebec, even though Quebec is the one issuing both types of birth certificates. The other provinces only have one type.

The third difficulty involves technological exchanges, the technological infrastructure itself. What we have to decide is whether the technology network will be a central data bank, a big brother, perhaps. And that raises all sorts of political and other questions. Or will it be just a computer network allowing for the exchange of data but enabling each province to preserve its own data? That is the discussion—

Ms. Louise Thibault: That was one of the comments that Ms. Fraser made in her report. How long have you been working to try to find a solution with your 13 partners? How long have you been discussing this?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Can you answer that question, Gary?

Mr. Gary McDonald: We have been working on this for several years, since the beginning of 2002. After September 11, 2001, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs contacted all his provincial counterparts and discussions got underway on identity. That is really our concern: How do we identify Canadians? And the way to share information was—

Ms. Louise Thibault: If I understand correctly, you are sharing information. Of course, when you mention big brother, everyone becomes paranoid right away. You know that the respective jurisdictions of the territories and provinces are something that I hold sacrosanct.

Over the past five years, have you had a working group looking into this?

Mr. Gary McDonald: Yes.

Ms. Louise Thibault: Could you come back in six months or a year and tell us where you are at with this question? I am thinking that it would probably be possible to do some positive and beneficial things. I'm speaking in the first person, as always, because I would be happy to do that, within the limits of my role and my knowledge.

I would like you to get in contact with the clerk at some point so that we could organize a meeting and you could update us on your progress. I have no doubt that you will improve things. Of course, I am quite critical because we have a crisis on our hands; you know that as well as I do. I had no intention of criticizing your whole organization; far from it. I mentioned the Montreal and Quebec City offices to you, which have excellent staff.

On another point, a number of colleagues have raised the problem of communication. People arrive at 2:00 a.m. or at 4:00 a.m. to be near the front of the line at 9:00 a.m. That is too bad, really, because some of those people do not need their passport until July. Ms. Thomas said that it was probably paranoia.

What measures have you taken to communicate with the public? When you found out that there would be problems, what communication plan did you develop to try to eliminate that paranoia?

● (1700)

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Regarding the American initiative, the information on when exactly it would come into force was quite unclear. The question of the deadline caused difficulties. I am prepared to admit that we have not communicated as well as we might have. We are using the Internet site as effectively as we can.

Ms. Louise Thibault: I will just tell you how I see this, deep down. There are 308 members' offices, so 308 people—minus one, since there has been a resignation—that you could enlist to help you. We organize press conferences, we talk to local newspapers and we meet with people. The people who work in our offices are by definition a way for you to communicate. You have apologized, and I thank you for that. It is a good thing when people are able to acknowledge that it will be possible to do better next time.

Some members have regional ridings. My colleague, for example, is fortunate that he is right beside the passport office. When it comes down to it, 100 or 150 MPs naturally act as agents for you in a way. I am sure that they are generally pleased to help.

For us, however, dealing with these people involves costs. Those are costs that you do not have to assume, since you do not see these people in your offices. I would bet that when those passport envelopes arrive in your offices by express courier—a service that is costing me four times as much every week as it did a few months ago, by the way—you generally find that the application has been filled out properly. I am sure that this applies to all my colleagues. After all, we do not want people in our riding telling us that their photos were not acceptable or that the signature was not in its proper little box. I invite you to take advantage of the fact that we are here to serve our constituents. That would be enough to reassure me a great deal.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Madam Chair, I must say, to be honest, that our dealings with members' offices have not really been a success. We organized two seminars, including one specifically on the American initiative. It was on December 5th, and I was there. I think that there were about 16 people there.

Ms. Louise Thibault: In Ottawa, or in Quebec City?

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Here in Ottawa.

Ms. Louise Thibault: That is the problem, sir. My staff are in Rimouski. I would not bring three assistants here.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: In fact, our new strategy is to take our information sessions on the road. Beginning April 1st, we will be holding clinics in the ridings with the most applications. Not all MPs provide the services, but for those who do, we will be providing them with better support.

The same is true for remote regions in the north, where applications might even be processed on-site at the clinic, so that people do not have to travel.

We are looking at all the options, though they may be few in number, to make it easier to provide good service. I think that we are now prepared to offer what I call an asymmetric service, which means that infrastructure is good, but if we cannot offer the service, there may be other ways to do it. We need to go where people are and try to provide them with the best possible service.

● (1705)

Ms. Louise Thibault: Please put my name back on your list.

[English]

The Chair: Mr. Bevington, you wanted to say a few words?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Back to the mail service: Is there any potential you could open a regional mail site, say in Edmonton, which would provide much better service in the western region?

Ms. Jody Thomas: We're looking into a number of strategies for mail service within the next three weeks. We have a facility in Mississauga. I know it doesn't resolve the northern issue, but at least it will be another site we can rapidly staff to take some of the overflow. That will be happening in the next two to three weeks.

We're examining a number of strategies to resolve the mail problem because geographically it's evident: we're always going to have people where we don't have offices. We're studying a couple of options, but one of the most prominent is that we know we have surges at certain times of the year because Canadians like to travel when it's cold. Canada Revenue Agency is a model to follow, in that they have surges every year at income tax time and they have seasonal employees they hire year after year to work for them. Generally, it's data entry, but I think we could follow a model like that to hire seasonal employees, in places where seasonal employment is potentially a known entity, and maintain that facility and the cost of the facility throughout the year, but only staff it for the six to seven months of the year when we need it. That's not an immediate fix; it has to be studied and costed and we have to find the space. But I think it has to be the way we go.

Generally, through the summer our volume can be in the negative, so we're carrying cost and people we can't really afford for the five or six months of the year where we have huge volumes. The disparity between the troughs in the volume and the peaks in the volume is enormous, but we can't staff and prepare for the average any longer. We're certainly aware of that, and we understand it's too late for this fiscal year and for this current problem, but we have another wave coming and we hope to be ready to use these kinds of strategies for the second phase of WHTI. Certainly I think we have to look at seasonal employees and employment that have been successful models for other agencies. Where it will be I couldn't answer right now, but we want to do that and are studying it actively and working with partners. I think this is a good approach.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Would there be any sense you could use municipal offices to create a time when a Passport Canada official could come to town, and if a municipal office could get you enough clients to make it worth your while, that you could bring somebody into a small community and get the passports done in one fell swoop?

Ms. Jody Thomas: We're looking at northern fly-in squads as a strategy during our low season over the summer to use some of these employees we have on staff to be able to give service to northern and remote areas.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: I think that would be excellent.

The Chair: Are there any other questions?

Thank you. I thank you for coming.

[Translation]

As you know, this is a subject that is dear to my heart. I am eager to see the changes. I have been promised several times that there would be changes, but I have not seen any.

In my riding, I tell people not to buy tickets for their trip until they have their passport, because they can lose their money. I do not want to see that happen. However, even after telling them that, there are some people who think that they already have a passport and then they look for it and realize that they don't have one.

[English]

There are other times when people travel a lot and they need their papers to travel. When you have to send it through your MP, and it takes at least 30 to 40 working days—it was taking even longer than that for a while—it's very difficult for these people because they need the documents. So I hope you can do renewals more quickly and find a way. I can tell you that the people from northeastern Ontario, and I speak for most of them up there, would tell you you've got to find a way to help a lot of these communities. These are not rural and remote communities.

• (1710)

Hon. Raymond Simard: Not Sudbury.

The Chair: No, there's nothing.

Hon. Raymond Simard: It's a big place.

The Chair: It's 167,000 or something, and that's just the city.

I'm saying to you, it's not just Sudbury, but Timmins, Kirkland Lake, all of these places.

I'm originally from Kirkland Lake, which is four hours away from Sudbury. Sudbury is four and half hours from Toronto, and try driving those highways in the middle of winter to go and stand in line. You talk about standing in line, that's what these people have to do, stand in line and stay overnight, because you can't do it all in one day. So you have to find a way to alleviate that challenge. That's a big one for me.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Madam Chair.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: I would like to use up my last two minutes.

The Chair: Yes, sure.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: On that very positive note, just let me, on behalf of the government, thank you for doing an incredible job in the face of very difficult obstacles. Not only have you done a good job in that time, but the plan you've laid out here I think gives all of us a lot of hope and confidence in the work that you're doing. So on behalf of the government, thank you.

Mr. Gérald Cossette: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm not going to adjourn the meeting right away. I'm going to say that we wanted to discuss future business, but we don't have everybody here. Would you prefer it if we put it on to next Tuesday's meeting?

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Sure.

The Chair: I think that would be better.

Mr. Wrzesnewskyj.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Madam Chair, I'd like to give a verbal formal notice that I'll be putting a notice to have Mr. Bennett from the Canadian Mint reappear before the committee. I should give a little background reasoning to the committee members why.

He gave a pretty rosy account of things when he appeared before the committee, and I was quite surprised by a newspaper article that appeared today stating that an outside consultant had been hired for over \$2 million.

Now, during the committee meeting we were provided with consolidated statements, statements that were consolidated to the point that it was pretty thin gruel. I was trying to get at some of the numbers. There was a drop in profitability year to year from I believe \$10.6 million to \$8.7 million, a \$2 million drop. I questioned him on the 37.5% drop in profitability. He just peripherally referenced that they had engaged outside consultants, but at no point was there even a hint that an outside consultant would cost over \$2 million, which is over 20% of the profitability of the Canadian Mint.

When I was trying to get at some of those numbers, and I'm looking at the blues here, I asked him about the line on administrative costs, the fact that they had gone up by 60% and were projected to go up 86%. I asked for numeric breakdowns on the various departments that could give us a better handle on what was causing these trend lines in the wrong direction. We got no answer, but we got part of our answer today in the newspaper that there's a \$2 million consultancy fee that was being paid.

I think Mr. Bennett should appear before the committee and provide some explanations that weren't forthcoming during the last meeting.

The Chair: Mr. Moore.

Mr. James Moore: I don't have a problem with that, but let's be economical with our time. Right? I mean, the—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Absolutely.

Mr. James Moore: So maybe—

The Chair: Do you accept this as a motion? We could write and ask him to come back, or do you want to have a motion back—

Mr. James Moore: No. Let's wait until Tuesday, and let's think about what we want to do as a committee. I don't have any problems with it. Obviously it's a legitimate question. But I just don't know beyond that one issue how much time we want to take away from—

The Chair: That's right.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: I think it should be pretty short. But I read this and I went....

Mr. James Moore: Well, have you called Ian and had a meeting with him?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: No, I haven't.

Mr. James Moore: Just call him. Sit down with him, and if you don't like it—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Well, he testified before the whole committee, so I think—

Mr. James Moore: No, that's fair—

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: —in terms of fairness before all committee members, we all deserve an explanation, and I really don't think it will require a lot of time. This should be a pretty straightforward explanation.

Mr. James Moore: Well, we can talk about it on Tuesday, but an alternative suggestion is that this committee can draft a couple of questions, send them to him, and say we expect an answer by the end of the week and get a written response. You can do that, rather than having him necessarily have to come here. There are different ways.

It's a legitimate question. You're a member of Parliament, and you're entitled to ask on behalf of your constituents. But we can talk about this on Tuesday.

● (1715)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: It's the timeframe.

Mr. James Moore: You'll have no opposition from us. You don't have to worry about a motion.

The Chair: We'll deal with it on Tuesday then?

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Yes.

The Chair: Okay.

The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

**Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address:
Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante :
<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.