



Ministerial Statement by

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THE MINISTER OF ECONOMY & LABOUR

New Processing Timelines for Spousal Letter Applications

6th March 2024

Mr. Speaker,

I rise before this Honorable House today to share that the Department of Immigration has established improved processing timelines for Spousal Letter applications. It is expected that this change will be welcomed by applicants.

Mr. Speaker,

Spousal Letters are issued by the Department of Immigration to assist spouses of Bermudians who, by the Bermuda Constitution Order 1968, are deemed to belong to Bermuda. An application for a spousal letter is not mandatory – legally or otherwise - but more often than not spouses of Bermudians do apply for it, as other institutions request it. The process has proven quite beneficial to those who need it.

Once issued, the letter can be used for confirmation of the right to be landed and employed in Bermuda. Over the years, airlines, British High Commissions, Embassies, local banks and other local

agencies have come to rely upon the letter as an accepted document in order to grant individuals unhindered passage and access to key services in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

Some of the requirements for the application process include a completed Application for Residence Form (<https://www.gov.bm/online-services/apply-residence>), a police certificate, medical clearance, passport size photos, proof of citizenship, the marriage certificate, and a birth certificate. Although Spousal Letters are not issued with an end date, applications for new letters are submitted because the original letter was damaged, lost or destroyed.

Mr. Speaker,

The processing timelines were 3 months for new applications and 1 month for renewals. Based on the Department of Immigration's continued efforts to streamline processes, recent considerations were given for improving the timeline for those applications.

I am pleased to advise that effective February 12, 2024, new Spousal Letter applications are now being processed in 1 month and renewals in 10 working days.

Mr. Speaker,

Dating back to March 2023, I presented to this Honorable House timelines for processing passport and work permit applications and changes to the front-facing interactions with clients who attend the Department of Immigration to submit applications and/or to make inquiries. Although the Department's timelines were impacted by the cyber-attack in September 2023 (as with

other Government departments), all of these changes are a testament that the team is constantly reviewing and adjusting its processes. I am pleased that Spousal Letter applications has now been added to the list. In the coming months, I expect to provide further updates of improvements in the Department.

Thank you.