



Ministerial Statement
By
Senator, The Hon. Michael M. Fahy, JP
Minister of Home Affairs

Wednesday, February 18, 2015

**Department of Immigration – Initiatives for
Implementation at March 1, 2015**

Madam President, I am advising of the initiatives that the Department of Immigration will be implementing at March 1, 2015, namely: 1) the Work Permit Policies; 2) new Work Permit Cards; 3) new signage at the L.F. Wade International Airport; and 4) the identification of “wanted” persons via the Immigration website.

Madam President, you will already be aware of the wide consultation employed to update the Work Permit Policies of the Department of Immigration. In December 2014, I announced that the new policies had been completed, awaiting implementation at March 1, 2015, after the associated work permit fees were tabled in the House of Assembly. I am pleased to announce that the new work permit fees were passed in the House of Assembly on Friday, February 13, 2015.

Madam President, not only were new fees required, but the new policies gave rise to the requirement to update and introduce new work permit application forms. During the week of February 9, 2015, the Department of

Immigration conducted Information Sessions with key stakeholders, including the Bermuda Employers' Council, the Bermuda Hotel Association, the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Bermuda Insurance Companies, the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers, the Bermuda Human Resource Association, and the Construction Association of Bermuda.

The application forms will no longer be printed by the Bermuda Press Limited. As a part of the Department of Immigration's cost-cutting exercise, the forms will only be available on the Immigration website at www.immigration.gov.bm. Employers and applicants will be able to complete the forms online and print them for submission with all relevant documentation to complete the work permit application.

Madam President, you may be aware that work permits issued by the Department of Immigration are paper-based and the work permit is required for presentation upon entry into Bermuda. Because the permits are paper-based, there has been a tendency for the permit to be folded excessively and/or damaged. While some work permit holders have taken the initiative to laminate their permits, in an attempt to preserve them, permits that have been laminated have not been accepted by the Department of Immigration.

Madam President, to fix the above and improve upon Immigration's service product, new Work Permit Cards will be made available to all work permit holders; short term, global, new business, global entrepreneur, standard, periodic, and special category work permit holders and to sponsored dependants (partners and children). The card's primary aim is to facilitate travel to/from Bermuda. It will replace the current paper work

permit document; paper documents will only be issued for employers' and Immigration's files.

The Work Permit Card, which will be laminated, is bigger than a credit card, but slightly smaller than a passport page. It will allow the permits to be more durable and the card can be easily stored on one's person, thus making it more accessible.

Madam President, the card will also provide the card holder with a faster, more streamlined, experience whilst being processed at any of Bermuda's air passenger arrival facilities. The Work Permit Card is featured with a Machine Readable Zone (MRZ) and can replace the permit holder's passport (for landing at the L.F. Wade International Airport) and be read by passport readers (*Note permit holders will still require their passport whilst transiting through overseas gateway locations*). Since the permit holder's travel details and purpose of entry are encapsulated in the MRZ, the card will facilitate faster processing times for cardholders at all Bermuda points of entry.

Madam President, to prevent fraudulent reproduction of the cards, the front of the card has been embossed with a security foil, which is fashioned in the image of the island of Bermuda.

A fee of \$145 will apply for each work permit card issuance. At March 1, 2015, both current and first-time (new to Bermuda) work permit holders and their sponsored dependants can apply for a work permit card.

Madam President, a new work permit card will also be issued to resident work permit holders and their sponsored dependants under the following circumstances:

- a) if the card has been lost, damaged or stolen;
- b) if the employer's name changes (where a person moves to a new employer; in a merger, the current work permit card should remain and be changed after it expires);
- c) if the card holder's name changes; and
- d) when the card expires

Madam President, the third initiative to be implemented at March 1, 2015 is the introduction of a Business Visitor Line at the L.F. Wade International Airport.

Madam President, new pop-up banners will be placed in the arrivals hall for the following passenger categories:

- a) Line 1 – for Bermudians, PRC holders, spouses and dependants of Bermudians and of PRC holders, and Residential Certificate holders
- b) Line 2 – for Work Permit Holders
- c) Line 3 – for Visitors
- d) Line 4 – for Business Visitors

Madam President, the last initiative by the Department of Immigration relates to “wanted” posters for “wanted” persons.

In December 2014, the Chief Immigration Officer sought advice from the Attorney General's Chambers as to whether the Department of Immigration could use “wanted” posters in an attempt to find person's who are in Bermuda illegally. Advice was received that confirmed the Department can proceed with such an initiative.

Madam President, the Department of Immigration is currently searching for at least one foreign national who is in Bermuda illegally (without the Minister's permission).

To this end, the Department of Immigration will be seeking the general public's assistance for "Wanted Persons" via the Department's website. These will normally be persons where all other avenues to find them have been exhausted.

Thank you, Madam President.