



Ministerial Statement
By
Senator, The Hon. Michael M. Fahy, J.P.
Minister of Home Affairs
Wednesday, May 27, 2015

**New Processes for British Overseas Territories Citizen
(BOTC) Passports Take Effect at June 5, 2015**

Madam President, I would like to take a few minutes this morning to advise the general public that changes to the processing of British Overseas Territories Citizen (BOTC) passports will take effect on Friday **June 5, 2015**. For Bermuda, BOTC passports are issued by the Department of Immigration.

Madam President, the significant changes relate passport personalization, printing and dispatch of BOTC passports. All of these functions will be undertaken by Her Majesty's Passport Office (HMPO). The transfer of these functions was a mandate of the UK Government; a mandate that was being imposed upon Bermuda and the following British Overseas Territories (BOTs): Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Montserrat, St. Helena, and Turks & Caicos Islands.

Madam President, the requirement to look at the printing of BOTC passports came as a result of the UK Government, via the Identity and Passport Service (IPS), introducing a new UK passport design with

improved security measures for British Citizens (only) on October 5, 2010.

The UK Government entered into a contract with De La Rue, the world's largest passport manufacturer, for the production of this new passport. The previous contract with 3MSPSL was terminated. At that time, interested parties were concerned that the termination of the 3MSPSL contract would likely limit the ongoing supply of passport books for the production of BOTC passports.

Madam President, discussions about the processes required to facilitate the printing of BOTC passports in the UK have been ongoing since early 2011. A working group comprising all of the aforementioned BOTs (including Bermuda) engaged in discussions about:

- the parameters for issuing emergency passports;
- ensuring that each BOT had sufficient passport books to carry them over as they transitioned to the new processes; and
- standardization of the passport application form.

Madam President, in the main, the new printing process will be implemented in two phases for all BOTs. **Phase 1** will require that passport application files be sent to HMPO via courier service. **Phase 2** will allow for the transfer of passport application files electronically. Due to the current passport stock that Bermuda currently has available, the local process will be slightly varied for **Phase 1**.

Madam President, on average, the Department of Immigration issues 7,000 BOTC passports (adults and children) per year. Under the new processes, the responsibility for the application process will remain with the BOTs. Establishing this end to end solution meant that the

Department of Immigration (along with all other BOTs) had to replace its current application processing system with a solution that fully supports the application approval process and which links securely to the IPS production system in the UK. I am happy to report that with both phases *no staff will be displaced* and there will be no requirement to increase the current headcount in the passport section of the Department of Immigration.

Madam President, as mentioned previously, the local process under Phase 1 is somewhat unique for Bermuda. Due to the current passport book stock (approximately 10,000 books), Bermuda will continue to personalize, print, and dispatch BOTC passports until Spring 2016. Notwithstanding this, the immediate changes on Friday June 5, 2015, will include the following:

- New application forms will be required for each passport application (the forms will be uploaded on Immigration's website at www.immigration.gov.bm); and
- New guidelines for the issuance of emergency passports will be strictly adhered to (the guidelines have been standardize across all BOTs).

It should be noted that the new fees will be determined upon confirmation of administrative costs associated with the courier services. To that end, I shall endeavour to apprise the public accordingly.

The current turnaround time of eight (8) working days will remain while Phase 1 is in effect.

Madam President, I wish to highlight that applicants for BOTC passports will see the following changes in the future:

- The passport application fees for adults and children will increase;
- The emergency/express service fee will increase; and
- Under Phase 2, the current turnaround time of eight (8) working days will increase to approximately 20 working days.

Madam President, Bermudians love to travel and in unfortunate circumstances; i.e. due to illnesses, Bermudians must travel. Therefore with knowledge that changes are imminent for the passport process, I am encouraging all BOTC passport holders to:

1. be diligent in keeping their passports in a safe place to avoid having to replace them prematurely and being delayed with their travel plans,
2. ensure that they take note of when their passports expire, and
3. to apply for new passports in a timely manner; i.e. always be mindful of the Department of Immigration's turnaround times.

Madam President, as I conclude, I commit to provide regular and meaningful updates to the general public, on this important initiative.

Thank you **Madam President.**