

Immigration

Reform



*Our Pathway to
Peace & Prosperity*

Immigration Reform

Immigration reform has been an issue of contention in Bermuda since the 1970s, and there have been too many missteps and broken promises to count along the way. We have yet to arrive at a satisfactory outcome as to what it means to be here, with rights. The injustices imposed upon someone who is born in Bermuda, yet somehow doesn't belong, or someone who marries a Bermudian, builds a family and a life here and still doesn't belong, are outright wrong. These scenarios need to be abolished for good.

We applaud previous attempts to address these issues in the early part of this century – nearly 20 years ago. At the time, it was stated that the Permanent Resident's Card (PRC) was a step towards compromise, with more to follow. Nothing followed.

There are numerous reasons why we need to have more people with a stake in the future of Bermuda and our people.

The cold hard fact is that we do not have enough regularly resident Bermudians to sustain the lifestyle to which we have become accustomed and that most of us desire.

Even before the Covid-19 global pandemic shut down the world's economies, an economic disaster was already manifesting within these shores. We have needed to boost the aggregate demand in the local economy for years. A declining population means less consumption of all goods and services that are sold in Bermuda. Everyone hurts when there are fewer people: production and consumption drop, less money is spent, and as a result, there are fewer jobs and fewer opportunities for Bermudians. We will continue on a downward spiral of fewer opportunities, and less room for economic growth until a comprehensive approach to immigration reform is implemented.

There are a few thousand non-Bermudian persons who have been living and working amongst us for years. We know and love them - they live among us, often even with us. We work, play, suffer and prosper together. They should have a stake in Bermuda's collective future.

The FDM will address the injustices that our friends, family members and loved ones have endured. This isn't about denying the rights of Bermudians. It is about our community, who we are, and why each and every one of us should have the right to call this island home.

The FDM's framework for immigration reform is:

- Were you born here? Then you belong.
- Do you have at least one Bermudian parent, regardless of where you were born? Then you belong.
- Did you arrive so long ago that we forget when you got here? Then you belong.
- Wherever you came from, would we be sad to see you go because your presence has value? Then you belong.
- Do you want to be here and to contribute to the betterment of Bermuda's society as a whole? Then you belong.

As such, The FDM proposes to confer Bermudian Status or Citizenship in the following cases:

- If a person is born in Bermuda and resides continuously for 7 years
- If a person arrives in Bermuda before the age of 18 and resides continuously for 7 years
- If a person over the age of 18 resides (and pays taxes) continuously for a period of 7 years
- For Spouses of Bermudians who remain married for a continuous period of 7 years
- A Spouse of a Bermudian who becomes a parent to a child born in Bermuda is to be conferred Status / Citizenship upon

the birth of that child, thus bringing both parents to equal jurisdictional standing, along with their child(ren).

- Children born outside of Bermuda to a Bermudian parent
- The PRC category will be abolished: either a person is a work permit holder, a digital nomad worker / resident, or they are a Status Holder/ Citizen with full inalienable rights.

More Efficiency / Less Cost

In all of the above cases, the FDM wants to see a change from an application process to one of basic registration, on the provision of proof of meeting the simple and clear criterion. FDM believes that removing any element of the discretionary grant, in the context of simply meeting criteria, is crucial to the wellbeing of the community at large.

The FDM is also committed to reducing the time it takes to process work permits and is oriented toward creating a fixed maximum period of 6 weeks, after which financial penalties will accrue to the relevant department if a decision is not made.

In keeping with the FDM's framework of lower fees and less governmental burden, the FDM is committed to substantially reducing the cost of all permit fees. The expense incurred in applying for permits represents significant barriers to entry, especially for shoe-string start-ups, and micro-entrepreneurs.

Separate Immigration from National Security

The FDM believes that the country would be far better served if there were a separation of areas of competence relating to work permits, Status / Citizenship registration, training, and labour from those relating to security, and as such would group together police, regiment, prisons, fire and customs under a separate agency.

In the FDM's quest to reduce the size of government, especially at the top, such a reorganization would allow the security agency to report directly to the Premier and Cabinet, thus reducing the need for a Minister of National Security.

Likewise, an agency focused solely on the efficient administration of work permits, Status / Citizenship, training and other labour initiatives could report directly to the Premier and Cabinet, and this would reduce the number of ministerial positions.

Our Vision for Immigration Reform

An open society is a more prosperous one. This has always been true. While the rest of the world becomes ever more closed, centralized, less private, with more fragile presumptions of innocence, we Bermudians have a chance to become a living example of the opposite, and to go forward as a haven for those who truly desire Freedom, with all its attendant, individual and collective, rights and responsibilities.





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