

## Passport Office Appeals to Citizenship Applicants

The Passport, Immigration and Citizenship Office (PICA) is urging persons, who have submitted applications for citizenship to contact the agency by November 7 to sort out their applications.

Director of Citizenship at PICA, Carole Hammond, said that the agency is experiencing a backlog in the processing of applications. "We have approximately 814 applications in backlog for citizenship to Jamaica and we are making every effort now as an agency to clear that backlog." Customers are being urged to check for their names among a list posted on the Jamaica Information Service (JIS) website at [www.jis.gov.jm](http://www.jis.gov.jm) and the Ministry of National Security's website at [www.mns.gov.jm](http://www.mns.gov.jm) and to contact the agency to verify what is needed in each particular case. The Director has warned that applicants will have to re-apply if they do not contact the agency by November 7. "Persons, who do not make contact with the agency by Saturday, November 7, 2009, will have to restart the application process as their application will be considered closed," she stated.

She noted that "while applicants are not required to (be in the country), particularly those who are in our backlog, many persons with pending applications already reside in Jamaica, therefore it is not a problem for them to come in to our offices." According to Mrs. Hammond, the backlog in applications, which dates from August 1998 to 2008, is not the fault of the agency, but is as a result of insufficient information provided by applicants. "The missing information would include photograph, verification of income, immigration information in their current passport and bank statements," she outlined, noting that applicants have not responded to requests by mail and telephone to provide the additional information to complete their application. Mrs. Hammond said that while the agency receives applications from many different countries, most of the 814 cases were from persons of Jamaican heritage. "Our applicants in this backlog include persons from Europe, China, India, Myanmar, some Caribbean countries, but most of the backlogs are from persons who are considered descendants so they were born abroad but to Jamaican parents," she informed. An agency under the Ministry of National Security, PICA processes applications for Jamaican citizenship for persons, who are Jamaican descendants or who do not have any affiliation to the country. Applicants, who are descendants, are not required to be domiciled and they can make their application from anywhere in the world. The agency also makes provision for persons, who were born in Jamaica but unfortunately, were not registered at birth. - JIS