

The Citizen  
chatted to the  
CEO, Charmaine  
Donovan, about the  
changes and improvements  
to the application process  
implemented by  
the Citizenship  
by Investment Unit.

**Despite the global lockdown, the Antigua and Barbuda Citizenship by Investment Unit (CIU) hasn't stopped for a moment. How have the last couple of months been for the Citizenship by Investment Programme (CIP)?**

The global lockdown has had a tremendous effect on all aspects of life, not least of which is the global investment migration industry. Despite this fact, the Antigua & Barbuda CIP has continued to enjoy significant interest. Continued accessibility during the lockdown period and the CIU's ability to quickly make the necessary changes to

facilitate the new digital normal were welcomed changes for current and prospective clients. This ultimately resulted in both a spike in enquiries and a steady stream of applications.

**How has the CIU digitalised and streamlined its application process? What has been the result of this?**

The CIU began making the transition to an online application process since the latter part of 2019 through the introduction of the agent's online portal, which enables agents to upload, submit and track applications on behalf of their clients. Testing of the portal began with a control group in early 2020 and feedback from this process enabled the necessary tweaks to be made to facilitate the roll-out in March 2020. The CIU also simplified the application process by changing the type and timing of the submission of documents, taking into consideration limitations to their access. The application process was separated into stages and the stakeholders were made aware of the primary documents required for each stage. This level of flexibility meant that applications could be submitted sooner. The simplification of the process in conjunction with the digitalisation has slashed the overall processing time by as much as six weeks in most instances.

**What other changes has the Citizenship by Investment programme undergone recently?**

During 2020, more focus was placed on improving the existing offerings under the Programme. A third pathway to real estate ownership was introduced so that prospective applicants had the option of purchasing approved real estate at a minimum of US\$200,000 as a qualifying investment. The existing co-application for the real estate option, with each applicant contributing a minimum investment of US\$200,000, was also made permanent (no longer a limited time offer). Furthermore, it was made clear to existing real estate owners that they are able to resell their units under the Programme after the five-year holding period. Additionally, based on feedback from the industry, the processing fees were aligned under three of the four options at US\$30,000; processing fees for the fourth option, the UWI option, are included in the investment amount. The Restricted Countries Policy was also modified by removing Iraq and allowing persons who were born in the remaining restricted countries to be eligible to apply once



they have resided in any country not on the list for at least 10 years (all other conditions of the original policy remain).

**Are you finding that the countries people are applying from have changed over the past few months?**

This global pandemic has put priorities into sharp focus for many. As a result, a number of persons have been searching for safer, less densely populated places to relocate to with their families. Accordingly, although we are still seeing significant interest from the traditional jurisdictions, there has been a noticeable increase in application submissions from the African Continent, Southwest Asia and the Middle East.

**Antigua provides visa-free travel to 165 jurisdictions which has always been a big draw to becoming a citizen of the twin islands. With what is happening in the world today, are you seeing a change in the reasons why people are seeking a second citizenship?**

The level of mobility afforded to holders of the Antigua & Barbuda passport has always been a pull factor to the CIP. As awareness of the Programme increases, people are finding that there are significant benefits to being a citizen of this beautiful twin-island nation. More recently, prospective clients have been intrigued by the skilful way in which the pandemic has been managed by the government and their foresight with upgrading and expanding the

healthcare delivery system. Additionally, the significance of higher education to the nation has been borne out in the arrival of the fourth-landed campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) in Five Islands one year ago. Prospective applicants have responded with much excitement regarding the fact that they are able to contribute to the sustainability of such a life-altering venture. Since its introduction in 2017, the UWI option has begun to attract applicants, particularly following the well-advertised modifications to this option at the start of the second quarter of 2020.

**Due to the world events which have been taking place in recent times, what would you say to someone who is concerned that their passport may not provide them and their families with the security and peace of mind they require?**

Thankfully, if you are a citizen and Antigua & Barbuda passport holder, there is very little that will disturb your peace of mind even in these unmatched times. If you are already residing in the serene and secure twin islands, you will already be feeling confident about the implemented safety protocols, the enhancements to the healthcare system and the infrastructure which facilitates a stable and remote working environment where you can work with and/or meet persons abroad virtually. If you are currently abroad, we invite to come home and enjoy the safety and security home affords you. If you are not yet a citizen, your next move is pretty obvious – apply now and become a member of the elite Antigua & Barbuda passport holders club.

**To sum up, what are the advantages of being a citizen of Antigua & Barbuda?**

Antigua & Barbuda has a myriad of investment opportunities and benefits for new citizens. In addition to mobility, there is something unique for every category of applicant from the executives and entrepreneurs seeking business and investment opportunities to the applicant looking for attractive, high-quality real estate as a vacation home and/or to earn rental income. Added to this, Antigua & Barbuda offers a safe and healthy living environment, world-class education and healthcare, perennial sunshine, pearl-white beaches, warm and friendly people and, last but by no means least, a paradise that you can call your home. Why wait? Apply today! ●