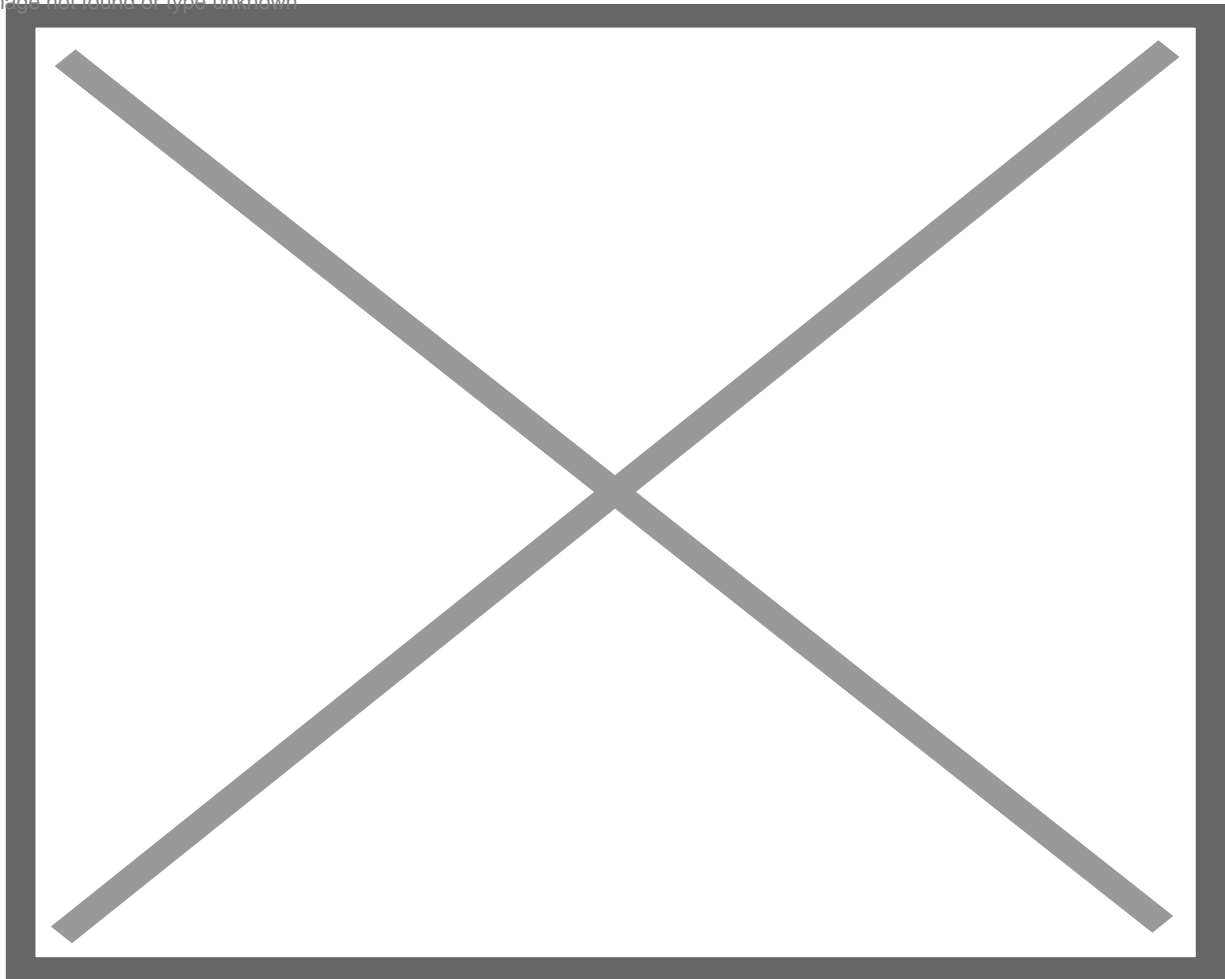


Canada Visa Application Center Opens in St. Lucia

Tourism / **Published On October 19, 2019 06:42 PM /**

Staff Consortium **October 19, 2019**

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The Government of Saint Lucia last week welcomed news that the Government of Canada had opened a Visa Application Center on the island. The new center follows continued dialogue and advocacy by the government on behalf of the people of Saint Lucia with the Canadian government.

This means that Saint Lucians wanting to travel to Canada will save on the additional costs to process applications in other islands, according to the St. Lucian government.

“We are pleased with the opening of a Canada Visa Application Centre in Saint Lucia,” said Anton Edmunds, who serves as Saint Lucia’s high commissioner to Canada, as well as ambassador to the United States. “We are especially happy that the costs associated with Saint Lucians needing to travel to other islands to get their biometric information processed, has been eliminated. This was becoming a disincentive to Diaspora and business travel to a country with

which we have such strong ties."

According to the government, it had been estimated that Saint Lucians were incurring costs ranging from EC\$2,000 for an individual and approximately EC\$8,000 for a family of four, to travel to Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, to submit the required biometric data.

The release added that Saint Lucia's concerted advocacy effort for a solution to the cost of accessing a visa to travel to Canada, goes back to mid-2018, and included regular engagement with senior government officials of that country. The Government of Canada was asked by the Government of Saint Lucia to consider, amongst other things, the deployment of a mobile system that would obviate the need for travel. While other OECS (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) countries have been the beneficiaries of the aforementioned mobile system, beginning late August, that operating framework is periodic and necessitates travel to those countries by officials from the Canadian High Commission.

The permanent Visa Application Center in Saint Lucia will process visitor, student and work visas, according to the release. The Center in Saint Lucia is managed by an outsourcing and technology service entity that provides visa processing services to the Government of Canada.

Details on the application process can be found at <https://www.vfsglobal.ca/Canada/Saint-Lucia/index.html>