

## **I need my Marriage Certificate..... NOW!**

Richard Kaufman – Our Wedding Celebration ~Wedding Officials~

Have you ever had a couple approach you, eager to be married this Thursday or maybe next Tuesday, asking, "How soon can we get our Marriage Certificate?" If you're like me, you've faced this question more than once. It's crucial to remember that the issuance of Marriage Certificates falls outside our purview as officiants. It is the responsibility of the Office of the Registrar General for the Province of Ontario.

### **Did You Know About the Service Guarantee?**

The Office of the Registrar General (ORG) offers a compelling "Service Guarantee" for issuing a Marriage Certificate: it will be delivered within 5 business days, or the couple gets their money back, albeit with a \$30.00 surcharge per certificate<sup>1</sup>. This seems fantastic, right? Our couples could potentially receive their Marriage Certificates just five business days after applying!

### **Not So Fast.....**

There are "Conditions" that must be met for this Service Standard to be applicable.<sup>2</sup> One of the most pertinent conditions involves the timing of the registration of the marriage.

*"The event must be registered by the ORG and in electronic format at the time the application is received. It takes approximately 16 weeks from the date of birth, **10 weeks from the date the marriage** and 12 weeks from the date of death to register the event. Your request for a certificate will be processed after the registration is complete. You are not eligible for a Service Guarantee if the event is not registered when you apply for the certificate."*<sup>3</sup> This Service Standard applies to issuing of Birth, Death, and Marriage Certificates.

The event, in this case, the marriage, must be registered by the ORG in electronic format at the time the application for the Marriage Certificate is received. Registration can take up to 10 weeks from the marriage date. Hence, the real question becomes, "How can we expedite the registration of our marriage?"

Unfortunately, there is no formal process to expedite the registration of a marriage. Despite claims from some officiants that following certain "steps" could result in receiving the Marriage Certificate within 2-6 weeks, there's no guaranteed way to expedite this process. Any faster processing times are likely coincidental.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.orgforms.gov.on.ca/eForms/eForms\\_faq/serviceStandards.do#:~:text=Service%20Guarantee%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20for%20Premium%20Online%20Birth%2C%20Death,%2430.00%20per%20certificate%20requested%20applies.](https://www.orgforms.gov.on.ca/eForms/eForms_faq/serviceStandards.do#:~:text=Service%20Guarantee%20Terms%20and%20Conditions%20for%20Premium%20Online%20Birth%2C%20Death,%2430.00%20per%20certificate%20requested%20applies.)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

## Steps to *Potentially* Expedite the Process

While there's no surefire method, there are steps a couple can take that might improve their chances of receiving their Marriage Certificate sooner, especially outside the peak wedding season (June to September) when 55% of the weddings happen in Canada:

**As an Officiant:** Avoid making promises about timelines for receiving the Marriage Certificate.

**Application:** Encourage the couple to [apply for their Marriage Certificate online](#) on their wedding day, noting the "Order Number" for any follow-up correspondence.

**Request to Expedite:** Draft a letter requesting expedited processing, citing urgent reasons, and including both the marriage certificate order number and the marriage license number. Supporting documents should also accompany this letter.

[Reasons for Urgency listed on the Service Ontario website include:](#)<sup>4</sup>

- documentation of a medical emergency
- a letter confirming new employment
- a letter from a consulate or embassy confirming an appointment
- travel reservations including airline tickets, reservations or travel itinerary
- a letter confirming an appointment for an immigration hearing
- a wedding invitation, where the applicant is a party to the marriage
- other situations subject to review

**Delivery:** Advise the couple to deliver this letter and documentation to you, the officiant, for mailing with the Marriage Licence to the ORG via Express or Registered mail. They should cover the cost and you should provide them with the tracking number for follow-up. Having The tracking number allows them to confirm that the ORG has received the documents, and more importantly when (the date) they were received.

## Reality Check

It's important to note that while these steps may positively influence the registration process, there is no guarantee of expedited service, particularly during the peak wedding season. By understanding the intricacies of the issuance process and taking proactive measures, couples can navigate the journey of obtaining their Marriage Certificate with greater clarity and confidence.

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-get-copy-ontario-marriage-certificate-online#:~:text=To%20qualify%20for%20an%20emergency,documentation%20of%20a%20medical%20e](https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-get-copy-ontario-marriage-certificate-online#:~:text=To%20qualify%20for%20an%20emergency,documentation%20of%20a%20medical%20emergencyhttps://www.ontario.ca/page/how-get-copy-ontario-marriage-certificate-online#:~:text=To%20qualify%20for%20an%20emergency,documentation%20of%20a%20medical%20e)  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-get-copy-ontario-marriage-certificate-online#:~:text=To%20qualify%20for%20an%20emergency,documentation%20of%20a%20medical%20e>  
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