Building Permit Frequently Asked Questions

**Answers to Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. What is a building permit?**

A building permit is a license of sorts issued by the Building Section of the Planning and Development Department. The permit grants the owner or his/her authorized agent, legal permission to commence construction. Furthermore, the issuance of a building permit provides building officials with the means to enforce the requirements of the code and other applicable standards to ensure compliance.

**2. Why is a building permit required?**

Building permits are necessary to ensure zoning requirements (contained in municipal by-laws), and building safety standards (contained in the Ontario Building Code) are satisfied in order to maintain or improve the health, fire and structural standards for the general safety of the public. The Ontario Building Code is a provincial regulation administered by the Building and Development Branch of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Under the Building Code Act, local governments are given authority for the enforcement of the Ontario Building Code within their jurisdiction.

**3. When is a building permit required? (Types of projects)**

Under the Ontario Building Code Act, a building permit is required for the construction of any structure exceeding an area of 10 m2. (108 ft2.). For example: a structure with outside dimensions of 12'-0" x 9'-0" (108 ft2) would not require a building permit but a building having dimensions of 12'-0" x 10'-0" (120 ft2) would require a permit

A building permit is required for new construction, additions, alterations, renovations, relocations, demolitions, and repairs or rehabilitation of a building or structure. Some minor repairs do not require a permit. Listed below are some typical projects and whether or not they require a permit. Heating Ventilating and Air Conditioning permits (HVAC), and/or plumbing permits may also be required as a separate permit but are usually reviewed as part of the building permit. It is the responsibility of the owner to obtain a building permit. The approved drawings should be kept on the building site and be readily accessible at all times.

The following are examples of projects that require a building permit:

* Finishing previously unfinished spaces such as rec. rooms, family rooms, attics, etc.
* Repair and underpinning of foundations
* Construction of temporary buildings
* Construction of accessory buildings (sheds, etc.) exceeding 10m2 (108 ft2)
* Installation of pool enclosures
* Construction of detached decks in excess of 60.96 cm (24") above the ground, or any deck that is attached to the dwelling
* Construction of attached and detached garages
* Demolitions

The following are examples of projects that do not require a building permit:

* Replacement of stucco, siding, or shingles with the same material
* Replacement of doors when the opening is not altered
* Construction of fences (other than Pool Enclosure Fences)
* Patching, painting and decorating
* Installation of cabinets and shelves

Note: Although your project may not require a building permit, it does not relieve you of your responsibility to comply with the zoning by-law.

**4. What can result from not obtaining a building permit?**

It is unlawful to commence construction without a building permit!

If the work does not comply with the Ontario Building Code requirements,

* Costly repairs may be required to gain compliance
* Removal of work done not in compliance may be required
* The building permit application fee may be increased
* Legal action may be initiated by the Building Department to gain compliance

If you are still not certain whether or not your project requires a building permit, contact the Building Section of the Planning and Development Department. Our staff will be able to assist you in making that determination.

**5. What types of drawings are required?**

Plans must contain sufficient information to enable staff to determine whether the proposed work conforms to all applicable regulations. Site plans must be referenced to a current plan of survey, certified by a registered Ontario Land Surveyor. A copy of each survey must be submitted with the permit application for most projects. Site plans showing outlines and dimensions of the property, driveways, and existing and proposed buildings may be accepted.

Where required by the Ontario Building Code, drawings must be prepared, sealed and signed by an Architect, Professional Engineer, or both. Two copies of all plans are required for each application.

**6. How do I apply for a building permit?**

The owner or his/her authorized agent must file an application, in writing. Proper drawings and specifications must accompany every application. Incomplete applications/drawings will not be accepted.

**7. Who will review permit plans?**

Permit plans will be reviewed by staff for compliance with the Zoning By-law, Ontario Building Code and other related standards and by-laws. Development Engineering staff will review the proposal with respect to grading and drainage. Where applicable, the Fire Department will examine the plans for compliance with fire safety provisions contained in the Ontario Building Code, the Ontario Fire Code (where applicable) and related standards.

**8. Who obtains the approvals from other agencies?**

It is the responsibility of the applicant to secure required approvals from other agencies (where applicable) prior to the issuance of a building permit. Staff will advise the applicant of the required approvals from other government agencies upon permit application.

**9. How long does the building permit approval process take?**

The time required for the processing of a building permit application varies in accordance with:

* the quality and completeness of the submitted plans
* the degree of compliance of the plans with applicable regulations
* current workload of staff ( Spring and Fall are peak times for volume)

There are two busy seasons: Spring and Fall. These relate primarily to ground frost conditions. Processing times will vary from approximately 3 to 5 weeks during the off season and 6 to 8 weeks during peak times.

Our staff is prepared to provide reasonable assistance to the applicant, when requested to do so, but must refrain from assisting in the laying out of work or acting in the capacity of an engineering or architectural consultant. TACBOC Standard Details are available to you upon request and are often used on small projects to supplement the drawings prepared by you.

**10. What is the cost of a building permit?**

For complete information on building permit fees, please refer to Building Permit Fees in the Fees and Charges By-Law.  In addition to the permit fees, other required fees such as municipal, regional and education development charges, damage deposits, cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication, and other applicable fees, must be paid prior to the issuance of a permit.

* Fees vary depending on the building type and nature of the construction.
* Most decks, small garages, sheds, and very small house alterations will fall close to the minimum fee.
* Fees are generally based on area (in square meters) and type of building.