

17

BIZPAL PERMIT & LICENSING INFORMATION ACCESS INITIATIVE

The Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated June 11, 2008, from the Commissioner of Planning and Development Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the implementation of the BizPaL online permit & licensing information system.
2. The Regional Clerk circulate this report to the local Economic Development Offices for their use and analysis in relation to the BizPaL program.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of the report is to:

- Provide detailed information on the joint federal, provincial, and municipal BizPaL permit and licensing information access initiative.
- Set the timeline and framework for BizPaL implementation.

3. BACKGROUND

BizPaL is a Canada wide permit and license web-based online access system run by Industry Canada in partnership with the provincial governments and territories, regional and municipal governments.

BizPaL Objective

- To streamline permits and licenses information access for business.

Municipal Benefits

- Reduced compliance costs and efforts with less lost revenue from unintentional non-compliance.
- Provides a better overview of your permit and licence inventory and regulatory load.
- Consistent permit and licence information across channels.

Federal Government Involvement in the BizPaL Information Initiative

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of small business to Canada's economy and understands the challenges associated with starting up and growing a business. Since 2006, the Government of Canada has introduced a number of key measures to help small and medium-sized business across the country.

One of the initiatives is an investment of \$3 million a year in the Business Permits and Licenses (BizPaL) service, an online tool that helps entrepreneurs simultaneously access permit and licence information from multiple levels of government.

Cross-Canada Implementation

BizPaL is in the process of being implemented across Canada. Currently, the following jurisdictions are participating:

- Government of Canada (Industry Canada)
- Natural Resources Canada
- Government of Alberta (and the City of Edmonton)
- Government of British Columbia (34 municipal sites)
- Government of Manitoba (15 municipal sites and 1 regional site)
- Government of the Northwest Territories
- Government of Nova Scotia (Halifax and New Glasgow)
- Government of Ontario (47 sites including the Regions of Peel and Halton and in York Region, King Township and Whitchurch-Stouffville).

Planning Discussions with Area Municipalities were held in October 2007 and in February 2008

On February 22, 2008 at York Region's Economic Development Officer Partner's meeting interest, plans, and progress was verified. All nine York Region municipalities are planning to participate in BizPaL.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

BizPaL Results in Cost and Quality Savings for Entrepreneurs and all Levels of Government

A series of questions regarding their business guides entrepreneurs through the business permit and licence process. A list of all licences and permits are provided immediately, showing the requirements from each level of government.

The Outcome is:

- A list of permits and licenses that may be required for a particular business resulting in time efficiency for the entrepreneur and the issuing government.
- Increased business compliance by providing awareness of permit and licensing requirements.
- Consistent information from all government jurisdictions.

Streamline York Region Permits and Licences across Departments and Municipalities

The implementation of BizPaL in York Region will mainly serve as:

- A portal to the nine area municipalities. Most permit and licensing requirements for business are through the municipal governments. Currently integrated into BizPaL are 21 permits and licences from East Gwillimbury, 13 from King Township, and 43 from Whitchurch-Stouffville.
- The number of permits and licenses posted online from regional government ranges from 4 to 11. Staff is developing a Regional list of permits and licenses with the Clerk's Office and will then meet with the relevant York Region Departments to determine which permits and licences we will post on BizPaL.
- Examples of York Region permits and licences that can be included in BizPaL are:
 - Planning and Economic Development Services Department, Geomatics Services: "Information Gateway" licences from the Development Charges list. Posting will indicate the cost and contact information to obtain the licence.
 - Transportation and Works Department: "oversize vehicle permit."
 - Community Services and Housing Department "lodging house licences."
- Easy access to permit and licence forms, costs, and contact information will result in time reduction for York Region and area municipal governments. It will facilitate business enquiries and enhance customer service for citizens.

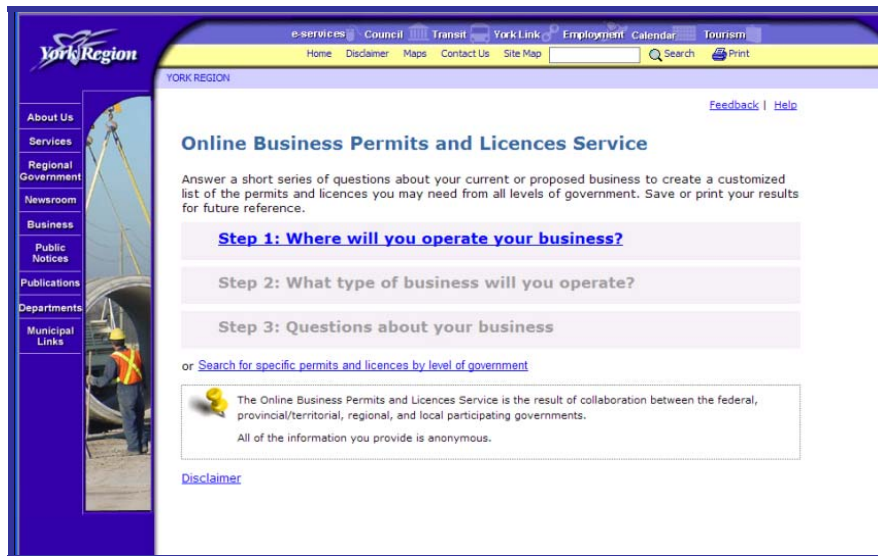
How BizPaL Works

A central server holds all government partners' permit and licence data and individual municipal websites draw information from the BizPaL server when needed.

This means that:

- Partners maintain their own data.
- The business user can seamlessly access integrated information from participating jurisdictions.
- Clients can access information from all partners using any BizPaL point of entry.

Municipal partners can integrate the BizPaL display screens into their own website, with their own look, feel, and branding. Below is a “mock up” version for illustrative purposes only of BizPaL on the York Region website.



The screenshot shows the York Region website interface. The top navigation bar includes links for e-services, Council, Transit, YorkLink, Employment, Calendar, and Tourism. Below this is a secondary bar with Home, Disclaimer, Maps, Contact Us, and Site Map. A search bar and a Print button are also present. The left sidebar contains a vertical menu with links: About Us, Services, Regional Government, Newsroom, Business, Public Notices, Publications, Departments, and Municipal Links. The main content area is titled 'Step 3: Questions about your business' and includes a 'Start Over' link. It asks the user to answer questions about their business. The first question is: '1. Will you be constructing, renovating or changing the use of any part of your property, including a building/structure?' with a 'Hide question help' link. A yellow 'Question help' box provides guidance: 'If you are changing any portion of an existing lot, building or structure or the way it is currently used, then answer "Yes" to this question. For example, changing a hardware store into a restaurant is a change of use. If you intend to run a business from your home, please consult your local building department.' Below this are radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No'. The second question is: '2. Will you be putting a temporary or permanent sign on your building or property?' with a 'Show question help' link and radio buttons for 'Yes' and 'No'. The third question is: '3. Are you planning to make any changes to the existing plumbing system?' with a 'Show question help' link.

Implementation Resource Requirements from York Region

The following departments will be involved in the implementation:

- Clerk's Office – to collect all permit & licence information.
- Information Technology – to integrate BizPaL information in www.york.ca.
- Economic Strategy Branch, Planning and Development Services – to coordinate project implementation.
- Communications Department – for joint Press Releases with the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario will be required at the end of the project.

The Clerk's Office, Corporate Communications, and the Information Technology Services Branch are in Agreement with the Project Deliverables

The launch of York Region's BizPaL permit and licence service is planned for Q-4 2008. A project plan with implementation milestones is provided as *Attachment 1*.

The area municipalities are working with BizPaL directly to implement their permits and licences. Two municipalities have completed the process: King Township and Whitchurch-Stouffville. All nine municipalities plan to participate.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no costs for York Region or the local municipalities associated with the implementation other than staff time for launching and ongoing updating of the information. The project is funded by the Government of Canada. The Government of

Ontario (ServiceOntario) has committed to fund the ongoing operating costs for all Ontario Municipalities and Regions.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The BiZPaL initiative provides a comprehensive permit and license information tool that can be utilized by entrepreneurs and government to understand permit and license requirements. The Region will continue to work with Service Ontario and the local municipal economic development offices to implement the system.

7. CONCLUSION

Tracking permits and licenses is an important indicator of business economic activity. Private sector firms increase their knowledge of legal requirements and information is consistently available through one web-based source.

York Region and the local municipalities continue to participate in inter-jurisdictional initiatives. BizPaL will provide the Region with another opportunity to work toward streamlining government processes for citizens.

For more information on this report, please contact Sharon Végh, Program Manager, Economic Strategy at (905) 830-4444 Ext. 1509, or Patrick Draper, Director of Economic Strategy & Tourism at Ext. 1503.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)