

How Ontario local governments are leading the way for Canada

With Cloudpermit, Ontario local governments are leading the way for Canada as many Ontario counties have switched from paper-based permit systems to e-permitting. Cloudpermit has recently partnered with the Ontario Building Officials Association (the OBOA) to encourage local governments across Ontario to lean into innovation by adopting an all-in-one cloud-based system. Cloudpermit digitalizes the building permit process to reduce costs, improve customer experience, and increase efficiency.

Cloudpermit's key benefits:

- Conduct mobile inspections – all inspection data is part of the permit file
- Issue building permits 50% faster than paper-based systems
- Enable the public to apply for building permits online
- Implementation takes weeks, not months

Local government building departments across the province have benefited from Cloudpermit. [Learn more from the success stories below.](#)

These counties are leading the way in Ontario with Cloudpermit



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Cloudpermit is a big help for a small team in Township of Wainfleet

In the Niagara Region Township of Wainfleet, the municipal building department is a two-member team – Chief Building Official, Dave Methot, and his administrative assistant, Tara. Dave completes all offsite building inspections himself across the expansive rural community. When the Town Hall moved to remote work, he decided that an online e-permitting system would give them the efficiency they needed to save precious time and serve the municipality better.

Wainfleet is a largely rural township on the north shore of Lake Erie with just over 6,000 year-round residents and numerous summer cottages. Many seasonal contractors come to Wainfleet to work on construction projects, especially on vacation and agricultural properties.

The Township of Wainfleet was considering e-permitting to better serve their community before the pandemic came, because applicants would be able to submit and track the status of their application online without a trip to the Town Hall. Dave had recently attended a presentation by Cloudpermit at a neighbouring municipality. Several other Ontario municipalities recommended the service and features of the cloud-based platform.

“With our substantial land mass, it can be an hour round trip for people who live in the area,” said Dave. “We also have a lot of out-of-town contractors who have to drop by the office. Cloudpermit makes it much easier for them. Of course, they can also apply outside of business hours.”

When the pandemic first came, Wainfleet had not yet implemented Cloudpermit. The team had to adapt quickly to storing and sending all documents online. This was time-consuming and challenging to maintain. It was clear e-permitting would not only be convenient for contractors and the public to apply online directly, but also save staff time as they worked hard to adjust to a busy new reality.

“We were trying to transition to remote work by scanning documents and using email to send them back and forth,” Dave explained. “This was much less efficient than keeping all our documents in Cloudpermit where we can access them in real time from anywhere.”

The Cloudpermit team implemented the system and offered training remotely with no onsite visit required. Although COVID-19 made the implementation a priority sooner than it might have been, Dave is pleased that the Township will have this advanced e-permitting system well beyond the pandemic, both for the sake of his small, hardworking team and the public. “It is important to me that we are always improving our customer service,” he said.

North Middlesex launches e-permitting fast thanks to great partnerships

North Middlesex got a new e-permitting system in record time with some help from the neighbouring municipality of Middlesex Centre. The municipality intended to upgrade to Cloudpermit in the coming months, but with the sudden arrival of the pandemic, Chief Administrative Officer, Jonathon Graham, knew he needed move fast to a paperless system.

North Middlesex is an expansive rural municipality with about 2,400 households. Just northwest of London, it is geographically larger than the city at almost 400 square kilometres. Before Cloudpermit, an application to the building department required one or more trips over to the municipal office in Parkhill.

Jonathon wanted to find a digital solution to quantify municipal building services with ease. Their paper system made tracking documents and gathering statistics much more cumbersome and less reliable. He had heard about Cloudpermit from several other municipalities in the county that had recently adopted it. In neighbouring Middlesex Centre, Chief Building Official, Arnie Marsman, recommended it. Jonathon and Arnie decided to transition to a business model where they would use the same Cloudpermit database. Middlesex Centre had already set up a similar model very effectively with the Township of Lucan Biddulph.

When COVID came, Jonathon understood it was vital that the e-permitting system get launched in North Middlesex quickly. The province listed construction as an essential service but asked municipal offices to shut down. Residents and the construction industry quickly expected online services.

With the coordinated effort of Jonathon's team, Arnie's team, the Middlesex County IT department and Cloudpermit, North Middlesex launched their e-permitting system in a record three days. All work was completed remotely, including training.

"Cloudpermit and Middlesex County IT team were really in sync and proactive. They got the system up and running very fast," Jonathon shared. "It has given us an important way to help our residents, and it has been especially critical during the pandemic when the building industry was allowed to move ahead, but the municipal office had to be closed."

The service model with Cloudpermit allows smaller municipalities to collaborate on best practices and share resources. It also offers a familiar platform to construction companies and contractors who may work in numerous communities across the region. Jonathon is exploring partnerships with more neighbouring municipalities to streamline their services and share expertise.

Jonathon knows the area well and stays connected with many of his counterparts throughout the region. He grew up on a farm close by in Oxford County and now lives nearby with his wife and two daughters.

Ontario building departments rapidly adapt to remote work

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, municipalities across the province have had to conduct business differently. This spring, numerous municipal building departments across the province have swiftly implemented e-permitting platforms to allow employees and the public to socially distance.

With no interruption to service delivery, the Municipality of Grey Highlands Building Department has pivoted seamlessly to the “new normal” with the help of a cloud-based e-permitting platform called Cloudpermit.

Grey Highlands, a municipality southwest of Georgian Bay, has a population of 10,000 and a land mass 40 per cent larger than the City of Toronto. Serving the 883-square-kilometre area has provided unique challenges, but the online permit system has significantly reduced the number of required trips across the sprawling rural community.

“Our team has been incredibly flexible and responsive to the new challenge,” said Debbie Anderson, Chief Building Official for Grey Highlands. “With Cloudpermit, we can access our permits from anywhere, so our staff easily transitioned to working from home.”

Residents now submit their building permit applications online rather than visiting their municipal office. While Grey Highlands building inspectors must continue their essential work of in-person inspections, they now screen applicants through Cloudpermit first to ensure they are following the new safety protocols. The inspectors input their reports at the building site on a personal tablet rather than passing around paper documentation and then complete their additional work from home.

“All the files are attached to the record and everyone can track a permit’s status in real time. It is so much more efficient and transparent,” Anderson said. “We have also decided to scan our active permits from before the implementation into the system. They still have their original permit numbers and we can easily append new documents to the files like site plans or conservation authority approvals.”

All the municipal departments of Grey Highlands that review permits have embraced the platform. The finance, planning, public utilities and fire departments can access and update records. During virtual meetings, municipal staff have found it simple to discuss and share documents while they are all logged in.

“Digitizing our processes was an important next step for us anyways, but the timing of the implementation has allowed us to adjust very smoothly during this pandemic,” Anderson shared. “The helpful Cloudpermit team was able to install, update and support the system remotely with no downtime. In the first two weeks of the COVID-19 shut-down, we issued 40 permits online! It was an especially busy time for us, but we were prepared.”



As the world begins to rebound from the first wave of this pandemic, it is predicted that there will be a global reckoning on how businesses work in the future. Employees who have benefited from the convenience and accessibility of working from home have proven to their companies that remote work can also be extremely efficient. There may be a push for more remote accommodations long after the COVID-19 crisis passes.

Implementing a paperless system like Cloudpermit should be an integral part of crisis preparedness, with the likelihood of a second wave of COVID-19 or even another novel virus. But a digitized permit system improves efficiency, transparency, cost savings and equity at any time. With e-permitting systems like Cloudpermit, forward-thinking municipal building departments across Ontario will realize that they can achieve much more than a return to “business as usual”.

Township of North Kawartha Building Department goes digital during COVID in record time

When the Township of North Kawartha, Ontario was faced with the COVID-19 lockdown, the municipal building department—a staff team of 4—had to adapt quickly. They decided that they would implement an e-permitting system—while they had been considering an e-permitting system for their small municipality, decided the pandemic was the perfect time to move forward as quickly as possible.

The decision to choose Cloudpermit was easy. Its leading-edge technology was developed in partnership with small and mid-sized municipalities to suit their unique needs. Cloudpermit promised to implement it and train staff remotely within a tight timeframe. And the product's rapid adoption across the province in recent months brought numerous glowing references from Chief Building Officials everywhere.

“I am amazed by how easy the system is to use and how fast we were able to get up and running,” said Travis Toms, Chief Building Official. He added that it took only 4 weeks from his phone call during the pandemic to full implementation. “The Cloudpermit team was very responsive and helpful. I would enthusiastically recommend them to any municipality.”

Cloudpermit offers municipalities like North Kawartha a cloud-based building e-permitting software that can be accessed from anywhere. Applicants, inspectors and municipal staff across departments can submit, update and review permit applications in real time, which expedites the flow of information, improves transparency, and saves time and money.

The Municipality of West Grey building department adapts quickly to working remotely during COVID-19

Municipalities across the province have had to conduct business differently in the wake of COVID-19. The Municipality of West Grey, a mostly rural municipality south of Owen Sound, implemented Cloudpermit in January, which has allowed them to seamlessly adapt to the “new normal” of working from home, without interrupting service delivery.

“Cloudpermit allows our inspectors to do a lot more of their work remotely,” explained Karl Schipprack, Chief Building Official for West Grey. The two building inspectors on staff can review applications and documents, as well as submit their reports online. While they continue to visit some building sites, they can now input all their work on their tablets, further limiting their potential exposure to COVID-19. They can also work from home through Cloudpermit whenever they are not at a site.

Members of the public do not have to come to the municipal office to submit applications, which saves time and helps maintain social distancing. “We have one contractor in the area who submits a new application nearly every week. It took him much longer when we did not have e-permitting. He no longer has to visit the office, so he is very pleased with the new system,” said Karl.

Before Cloudpermit, staff would have passed each paper several times between individuals. Today, more paper in offices means exposing staff to potential viruses on the surface of the documents. While some municipalities are reducing risk by leaving paper in the mailbox for 24 hours before handling it, West Grey’s virtual documents in Cloudpermit are safe and ready for processing immediately.

Today, Karl is logged in from his country home outside Durham as he enjoys some extra quality time with his family and his Australian Shepherd mix, Cooper.

Building permit after a devastating barn fire issued in record time thanks to Cloudpermit

The Municipality of Grey Highlands quickly rallied after a recent fire leveled a barn on a family farm. The farm, owned by a local Mennonite family, now has a new barn thanks to the partnership of their community and municipal staff, with the help of Cloudpermit, e-permitting software.

In Grey Highlands, a municipality southwest of Georgian Bay, has a population of 10,000 and a land mass 40% larger than the City of Toronto. Serving the 883 km² area provides unique challenges. It is often a long trip for residents to municipal offices to submit permit applications. The introduction of Cloudpermit has significantly reduced the number of required trips across the mostly rural community.

It was a Saturday when the large barn caught fire. The fire department put the fire out as soon as possible, but the barn was destroyed. The Mennonite community came together immediately to remove all the debris from the foundation.

The farmers submitted the online permit, complete with drawings, over the weekend, so the Grey Highlands building department could review it as soon as they were open on Monday. On Tuesday morning, the inspecting engineer attached his report online to the same application. Grey Highlands issued the permit through the system that afternoon. The family began building the new barn on Wednesday morning—just four days after the devastating fire.

The unprecedented speed and ease of the permit application would not have been possible months earlier when the process was offline. The farmers would have had to make the trip into town several times to submit their application, bring the engineering report and pick up their permit. Since the Mennonite farmers who lost their barn do not drive vehicles for religious reasons, these trips would have been especially onerous for them.

There may have also been multiple phone calls to ask questions and request status updates. With Cloudpermit, notes on the system allow applicants to track the progress of their application throughout the process.

“E-permitting has put all of our documents in one place,” explained Debbie Anderson, Chief Building Official for the Municipality of Grey Highlands. “The tracking is phenomenal. There are no more lost documents and all the files are current.”

Debbie shared that it has been exciting to introduce the e-permitting system across municipal departments. “When Cloudpermit was implementing it, there was no downtime. They were very helpful and professional,” she said. “We’ve now added our finance, planning, public utilities and fire departments to the system. It’s a time-saver for all parties involved.”

Middlesex and Lucan Biddulph adopt new e-permitting software

The municipalities of Middlesex Centre and Lucan Biddulph were among the first adopters of e-permitting in Ontario. They chose the Cloudpermit system because it is the world-leading cloud-based software designed specifically for municipal building departments.

Many municipalities are still relying on cumbersome paperwork to complete inspections and provide permit services. Manual forms mean more paperwork for staff, along with challenges accessing and storing data. The result is more scanning, mailing or even driving to various locations to complete and deliver paperwork.

Middlesex Centre Chief Building Official, Arnie Marsman, and his team are forward-thinking trailblazers, so they were keen to be early adopters of this intuitive paperless system. After a smooth implementation process in Middlesex Centre, their team assisted its roll-out in neighbouring Lucan Biddulph.

“We are very pleased with the time we have already saved since implementing Cloudpermit,” said Marsman. “It has really been an invaluable software that has helped us to eliminate our manual processes for applicants, builders and municipal staff.” Since August 2019, the building department in Middlesex Centre has processed over 150 permits.

Municipalities throughout the province have recently embraced Cloudpermit’s all-in-one platform for both e-permitting and mobile inspections for tablets. This is not only more transparent, convenient and efficient—it saves time for everyone involved in the permitting process by having one cloud-based system. It also creates a truly paper-free environment, because it eliminates the need for printouts and mailings to share data.