

Economic and Efficient: North Glengarry's Digital Permitting System Boosts Revenue While Streamlining Operations

CASE STUDY

About the Township of North Glengarry

Located in Eastern Ontario, the Township of North Glengarry (population 10,109) is a vital connection point for major cities such as Ottawa and Montreal. North Glengarry is fully invested in providing robust municipal services, from its expansive road network upkeep to vital water system management. With varying permit volumes for Entranceway, Municipal Consent, and Work in Right of Way, the Township sought to streamline its permitting process to align it with their vision for sustainable community development.



The Challenges

North Glengarry's previous manual permit system created a range of inefficiencies and bottlenecks, such as a lengthy average of a two to three-week timeline to get a permit inspected, approved and back to the applicant. These challenges hindered their ability to provide quality services for their citizens.

"We had no way to be able to submit permits online," said Tim Wright, Director of Public Works with the Township of North Glengarry. Without any online options, this reliance on pen-and-paper processes, email, and in-person interactions created a frustrating experience for residents and applicants.

The reliance on manual processes and decentralized communication also placed a strain on staff and led to lost productivity. It also meant that permit applications could go missing. Tim admitted, "There were definitely times where the applications were lost in the shuffle of day-to-day work." This led to significant delays between permit application and installation.

The cumbersome process involved a resident submitting documentation, which then had to be printed, and emailed to a foreman. As Tim explained, "This is normally the stage where they'd find out that some sort of documentation was missing and that the foreman didn't have everything that he needed to be able to fill out the permits correctly." These missing documents

caused delays as the application had to be sent back to the applicant before the process could continue. Additionally, the upcoming Ontario broadband rollout threatened to further strain their resources with an influx of complex permit applications requiring oversight.

Finally, "permits had to be paid in person, which was very inconvenient," Tim said, highlighting the outdated nature of the entire permit process.



This is a solution that I'm always going to stick with regardless of our permit volume. I would always keep Permit Central... just because it gets rid of all the headaches for me, it's a very small operating cost for the benefit that it gives. - Tim Wright

The Solution

Seeking to transform their inefficient manual processes, North Glengarry needed a digital solution aligned with their vision for streamlined service delivery. This solution had to address several critical needs identified in their existing system, including the ability to link permits to foster collaboration and standardization with their Upper-Tier Municipality.

"We definitely wanted something that was digital and had to be very user-friendly, almost frictionless," Tim explained. Their goal was to find a platform that would provide a simple and efficient experience for applicants while reducing administrative overhead for staff.

Additionally, North Glengarry sought a platform with integrated online payments "The ability to pay online was something we were really looking for," Tim emphasized. Having already utilized Stripe for waste management, they hoped to use it to streamline permit fee collection as well, saving both applicants and staff valuable time.

Selecting Permit Central

North Glengarry's selection of Permit Central was influenced by several key factors. Their Upper-Tier Municipality's successful experience with Permit Central played a significant role, offering a positive

recommendation for the platform. The opportunity to standardize permitting practices with their Upper-Tier Municipality strengthened the case for adoption. This alignment promised greater collaboration and coordination.

Permit Central's multi-permit capabilities and intuitive form process also appealed to the Township. Additionally, Permit Central's seamless integration with Transnomis'

Municipal511 made it even more appealing. "We've really enjoyed Municipal511...It's a really good digital system and it really let our staff sort of refocus their time on the projects that I really wanted them to be working on," explained Tim.

Their experience during the onboarding process solidified the choice. As Tim described, "Our sessions with Transnomis were really smooth... it was very easy to use. We were able to use it really straight out-of-the-box, which was great." When an influx of utility company permits arrived, they were able to quickly leverage Permit Central. "Within a week we had this up and running, put all the permits through and had them turned around quicker than we would have if we had gone through the traditional route."

Results

Since implementing Permit Central in the first nine months, North Glengarry has processed 96 permits remarkably efficiently. They have rejected only six due to incomplete applications, which the system quickly flagged. This has resulted in a significant reduction in turnaround time for approvals. **"Our timelines are basically down to nothing now," emphasizes Tim, "It's essentially a system I don't need to think about anymore."**

The intuitive interface has simplified the application

process for residents and utility companies while empowering North Glengarry's staff. Other than a few "old school residents" who have contacted staff, most applicants are self-sufficient: "Applicants are able to jump online and check the status, we don't hear from them again."

"Our applicants are much happier now, thanks to the excellent templates provided by Permit Central. They can quickly submit permit details online, make payments, and receive prompt feedback. This system, standardized with our Upper-Tier Municipality using the same templates, improves collaboration, saves time and even generates revenue for North Glengarry."

The ability to work on permits simultaneously has also streamlined workflows. A swift and successful implementation – accomplished in approximately two months, even while accommodating key staff vacations – showcases the system's ease of use and the support provided by the Transnomis team. This transformation has led to cost savings and a noticeable improvement in staff morale. As Tim jokingly quipped, "All of our staff saved on Advil because there were no more headaches [because of permits]."

Future Outlook

The system's automation significantly eases the administrative burden that once dominated his workload. In fact, the seamless workflows have reduced his involvement altogether, enabling waterworks and transportation managers to take ownership of permitting processes.

Moreover, the system has proven to be a sound investment for the municipality. **"We've seen a direct financial benefit from using Permit Central," explains Tim Wright. "Not only has it paid for itself, but we're processing more permit applications with ease, driving increased revenue through more efficient permit processing, making it a valuable investment for North Glengarry's future."**

As the Ontario broadband rollout intensifies, North Glengarry anticipates a continued influx of permit applications. Their confidence in managing this high workload stems from their positive experience onboarding utility providers like Bell and Xplore. "It's been very, very easy to just say, 'yeah, use our Transnomis system.'" The ability to charge fees per permit contributes to the overall value and long-term sustainability of the solution.

Lessons from North Glengarry

"Start with the basic system and try to use as much as you can, everything just straight out-of-the-box." This practical advice from Tim Wright highlights the value of focusing on streamlining implementation within a digital permitting solution. As he explains, a standard municipal consent permit "can cover so many different aspects," allowing municipalities to quickly realize significant benefits.

Tim also emphasizes the power of collaboration: "An unintended sort of benefit is that we've really all started talking the same language. It's very easy to cooperate with our neighboring municipalities." Adopting a shared permitting platform fosters seamless processes for everyone involved – residents, contractors, and municipalities across a region.

