



Building Permit and SAFEbuilt Update

Presented by:

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Ministry for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation

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Mr Speaker

I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the proactive steps being taken by the Department of Planning to address the current backlog of building permit applications. Ensuring that construction in Bermuda meets the highest safety standards and adheres to our Building Code is a vital function of the Government.

Mr Speaker

As detailed in the budget brief, the Building Permit team processed 640 building permits and 323 permit revisions last year. However, the Department is currently receiving a significant volume of applications, exceeding 1,200 annually. This demand, coupled with increasingly inconsistent application submissions that often require multiple resubmissions, has contributed to delays that frustrate both industry professionals and individual applicants. While local consultants, contracted to aid the overburdened staff, have provided some temporary relief, the Department must avoid potential conflicts of interest that arise when local firms review their competitors' work.

Mr Speaker

To resolve this in an impartial and efficient manner, the Department has engaged the services of SAFEbuilt LLC, an experienced overseas professional services firm.

Following thorough research, SAFEbuilt has been contracted for a short period at a cost not to exceed \$60,000, with an option to engage them on an ad hoc basis as needed.

SAFEbuilt is uniquely qualified for this role because:

- **Technical Expertise:** Founded in 1992, they employ approximately 1,700 professionals across 40 states, including engineers and architects.
- **System Compatibility:** They are highly proficient in 'EnerGov', the same file management system and Customer Self Service (CSS) portal used by the Department of Planning.
- **Impartiality:** As an overseas firm, they provide independent technical capacity without the risk of local competitive influence.

Mr Speaker

I wish to reassure this Honourable House and the public regarding the parameters of this engagement:

- **Authority Remains Local:** The Department of Planning remains the sole statutory decision-making authority under the Building Act 1988. SAFEbuilt will provide technical reviews, but final approval or rejection of permits remains the responsibility of the Building Official.
- **Protecting Local Jobs:** This engagement is a supplemental measure to tackle a specific backlog; no current staff positions will be impacted.

Mr Speaker

This initiative is a short-term, targeted solution designed to stimulate the construction activity essential to our economy. By leveraging advanced electronic workflows and additional technical resources, we aim to restore reasonable permit timelines and strengthen public confidence in the permitting process.

Mr Speaker

SAFEbuilt began their work on February 17th, and in those three weeks since, they have processed 41 applications. Their average processing time from the date assigned to the date of permit issuance is 6.4 days overall, and that pace decreases steadily as they learn the specifics of the Bermuda context. In the past seven days, the pace has decreased to about five days per application, with some being processed in as little as two days.

Mr Speaker

I look forward to providing further updates as the work progresses and applaud the team at Planning for taking these bold and creative steps to make real progress on the challenges in the Department. By investing in the professional services of SAFEBuilt, we are providing the department with the extra help needed to eliminate the current permit queue. This means shorter wait times for every resident and developer on the island.

Thank You, Mr Speaker