



Ministerial Statement
by
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Minister of Public Works

The Vendor Prequalification Programme

Friday, February 3rd, 2023

Mr. Speaker, I rise to report on the Government procurement methods and the Ministry of Public Works initiative to improve this process by reducing the excessive amounts of unnecessary bureaucracy and minutia that local businesses have to endure when placing bids on Government contracts.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017 this Administration pledged to increase efficiency within Government and decrease the response time - a pledge I intend to keep.

Mr. Speaker and honourable members of this House, are familiar with how often the Government is required to obtain goods and services from external sources in order to fulfil the needs that cannot be met by Government alone. Specific to this Ministry, be that specialty services in trenching, excavation, mould remediation, asphaltting, landscaping, architecture, mechanical engineering, building maintenance; among others too numerous to mention but equally as important to ensure that public infrastructure is maintained at an adequate level.

Now to be clear **Mr. Speaker**, this Administration understands the necessity in protecting the public purse and ensuring value for money when attempting to acquire goods and services from external entities. Which is why this PLP Administration implemented the Code of Practice for Project Management and Procurement in 2018 – upon our return to Government.

Mr. Speaker, the code outlines how public officers procure goods and/or services on behalf of Government departments, offices and public authorities in accordance with their dollar threshold and procurement method from the initial request through the closing of an activity.

Since implementation, I am sure that the Ministry of Public Works is not the only Government entity which has received feedback from technical officers and companies in the private sector stating that the new method to place a bid on Government contracts is too burdensome and enveloped in excessive amounts of unnecessary paperwork.

Because of this **Mr. Speaker**, over the years the Ministry of Public Works has seen a decrease in the number of local companies applying for Government contracts as:

- (1) It costs money to place a bid on a contract through research and/or administrative time/personnel in order to compile the relevant documentation; and
- (2) It takes time for the technical officers to delve into the submissions to ensure the Government is receiving the best value.

Additionally **Mr. Speaker**, and I have to chuckle at bureaucracy at its' best – some of the documents that companies have to produce in order to bid on Government contracts consists of the same information over and over again. For example, if a company applies for two (2) contracts at the same time, the company would be required to give its' business information twice (i.e. address, payroll tax ID, Social Insurance ID etc. which is standard information that does not change often). If the company accidentally omits information from one of the bids, that company may be disqualified even though they submitted the required information on the other. Is this fair? I think not, especially when the information is literally, identical.

Mr. Speaker, simply to enlighten the listening public – the approximate timeframe for awarding contracts can range from five (5) weeks to thirteen (13) weeks or more. This wide ranging variation in response time is deemed unsatisfactory by the Ministry and those local companies (especially small to medium sized businesses) whom tend to operate on a monthly basis.

Again, this is unfair as some small to medium sized businesses may not have the capacity to hire additional administrative staff to keep on top of Government contracts and procurement notices even though, they have the technical ability and resources to complete the task required.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons the Ministry of Public Works is now launching a pilot program known as the Vendor Prequalification Programme for the upcoming fiscal year that being 2023-2024. This prequalification programme is designed to reduce the paperwork and red tape and accelerate the response time for small to medium sized business owners looking to bid on Government contracts. The prequalification will identify contractors qualified to supply goods or services to the Government.

How this works, the company can apply by filling in the required paperwork only once and upon review by technical officers – the company will be pre-qualified with the Ministry and able to place bids on Public Works contracts for the entire fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, for this programme the Ministry has identified thirty-two (32) different services in which there may be a necessity in the next fiscal year. The application for this programme and the list of categories are attached or can be found on the Government Procurement site at www.gov.bm/procurement-notice.

Mr. Speaker, it is anticipated that with this new procurement method - an expeditious bid submission and review process can take place for Government contracts which will reduce the aforementioned timeframe from thirteen (13) weeks to a minimum of twenty-one (21) days.

While the Ministry cannot guarantee that a prequalified vendor will ultimately win a bid for a contract **Mr. Speaker**, we can assure that those approved vendors who meet the prequalification criteria will benefit from a faster and far less complex procurement process.

Since the announcement of this programme and release of the Prequalification application several weeks ago on the Government procurement site, the Ministry has hosted a number of information sessions in-which representatives of twenty-one (21) companies have learned more and received assistance in filling out forms for this programme. I would like to emphasise that these information sessions are voluntary as a means for the Ministry to give small and medium sized businesses increased opportunity to secure work that will sustain them in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Honourable House and the listening public, if you or someone you know owns a business and fits in one or more of the categories listed on the Government procurement site at www.gov.bm/procurement-notice - I encourage all companies especially small to medium sized business owners to consider signing up for this prequalification programme and to not miss out on their chance to be awarded a Government contract.

The first application process opens Tuesday, February 7th, 2023 but more importantly, the application process is open all year and I encourage all companies to participate in this programme.

Thank You **Mr. Speaker!**