

From: ["Mochrie, Paul" <Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca>](mailto:Paul.Mochrie@vancouver.ca)
To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)
Date: 9/25/2023 6:28:07 PM
Subject: Memo to Mayor Council - Water and Sewer Connections Wait Times
Attachments: ENG - UWSD - Memo to Mayor Council - Water and Sewer Connections Wait Times.pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Please see the attached memo from Lon LaClaire. A short summary of the memo is as follows:

- We are temporarily facing excessive wait times for the installation of residential water/sewer connections, due to a spike in applications following the pandemic years, and further amplified by improved residential permit approval wait times.
- ☐ We are implementing a plan to address this issue and anticipate to gradually reduce wait times back to their historical normal by Q1 2024.
- ☐ We are engaging proactively with applicants, and implementing improved customer service support while maintaining a transparent prioritization and triage approach. Please direct any resident inquiries to sewerconnections.admin@vancouver.ca

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Lon LaClaire at 604-873-7336 or lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca.

Best,
Paul

Paul Mochrie (he/him)
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

September 25, 2023

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Interim Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Lon LaClaire
General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Increased Wait Times for Residential Water and Sewer Connections

RTS #: N/A

Following an inquiry by Cllr Fry and Cllr Dominato (email Paul Mochrie dated Sep 6, 2023 at 9:28am), I am writing to provide an update on the status of the service levels for water and sewer connections for residential applicants.

Background

- The City's crews deliver several hundred (700-900) water and sewer connections per year to service development applicants. The work is undertaken by the Sewer Operations branch for efficiency and due to their expertise working with deeper trenches.
- The connection is among the last tasks that an applicant has to have completed before they can move in to their property, so it naturally occurs at a point where the applicant is facing a level of fatigue and expectation as they approach occupancy.

Drivers of the Recent Increase in Wait Times

- Engineering received and delivered a monthly average of approx. 56 residential connections requests over the past four years, and maintained a consistent and satisfactory service level despite fluctuations in demand, and recent pressures including the pandemic (down-time, productivity loss due to COVID protocol compliance, sick time, remote work for office staff), attrition/retirements among our crews, as well as ongoing and sustained labour and supply shortages across the industry.
- Exceptionally in 2021, we saw a historic increase in residential permit applications submitted, averaging approx. 134 permits per month – 2.4x the historical average. In addition, accelerated application permit processing times starting 2021 have contributed

to this acute influx in applications due for installation. The volume of new applications subsided in the past few months, and the new applications coming in this year have dropped closer to the historical average of ~56 permits per month.

- Engineering began planning to manage the acute spike in demand that was triggered in 2021 by increasing hiring for connections crews (25 new employees were on-boarded over the past year), accelerating the implementation of operational improvements and efficiency measures, as well as conducting week-end installation blitzes starting the fall of 2022 and well into the spring of 2023.

Current State

- Our teams' efforts to ramp-up output have successfully paid off and allowed us to dampen the impact on wait times through 2022 and 2023, despite labour shortage.
- However, during the summer of 2023, we faced the peak of this spike in demand, and it is causing an increase in the connections backlog, and extended wait times.

Remediation

We are implementing a multi-pronged approach to respond to this short term peak in demand and to concurrently explore transformational improvements to the business delivery model. In the near term, we are:

- Reallocating resources to temporarily increase the number of connection crews until April 2024, adding eight additional crews (from the sewer renewal portfolio) to bring the total of connections crews from 10 to 18. This plan is anticipated to gradually bring down the wait times so they go back to normal by Q1 2024.
- Enacting temporary measures to maximize output during the coming six months such as extended work days, extended work weeks, and limiting or postponing non-essential services provided to other business units until the connections service levels stabilize. Also, we continue to cluster the installation of as many connections on the same block as possible, where appropriate.
- Dedicating additional resources to maintain real-time service metrics, undertaking proactive engagement with impacted applicants to keep them up to speed on progress.

Concurrent Longer Term Plan:

- Continue recruitment, training, and development of staff for sustained in-house core service delivery of connections, and associated equipment and services.
- Continue to improve operational data and analysis, resource optimization, and service level monitoring and reporting.
- Explore engaging third party contractors to manage surges in demand and complement the growing internal crews.

Our team is exerting every effort to respond to applicants with the highest levels of customer service and professionalism, while applying a transparent triage methodology that prioritizes occupancy timeline for those applicants that are most ready to move-in. Please direct any inquiries to sewerconnections.admin@vancouver.ca

Thank you for your ongoing support. Please let me know if you require any further information.



Lon LaClaire, M.Eng., P.Eng.
General Manager, Engineering Services

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