

From: ["van Dyk, Donny"](#)

To: ["Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"](#)

Date: 9/16/2025 2:10:30 PM

Subject: Memo to Mayor & Council - Update on Multiplex Electrical Service Connections - September 16, 2025

Attachments: [Memo to Mayor & Council - Update on Multiplex Electrical Service Connections.pdf](#)

Dear Mayor and Council,

This memo provides an update on the City of Vancouver's ongoing work with BC Hydro to reduce the costs and timelines for electrical service connections for new multiplexes. Key points include:

- The City and BC Hydro now prioritize overhead electrical service, which is a faster and lower cost process than underground service. 73% of multiplex applications are currently being serviced overhead, an increase from 43% under Hydro's previous design standards.
- This work has led to process improvements to reduce connection timelines, policy changes to reduce connection costs, and capacity building efforts to encourage innovative electrical designs.
- The City and BC Hydro's collaboration on multiplex improvements will continue in Fall 2026, and will broaden to include service connections to larger buildings.

Thanks,
Donny

Donny van Dyk (he/him)
City Manager
City of Vancouver

MEMORANDUM

September 16, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services
Saul Schwebs, Chief Building Official

FROM: Josh White
General Manager, Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability

SUBJECT: Update on Multiplex Electrical Service Connections

RTS #: N/A

This memo provides an update on the City of Vancouver's ongoing work with BC Hydro to reduce the costs and timelines for electrical service connections for new multiplexes.

Over the past 18 months, the City has been working closely with BC Hydro and industry partners to streamline electrical servicing, with shared affordability, process efficiency, and climate action objectives. The initial work has focused on service connections in low-rise homes and the outcomes of the work are described below. A second phase of work focusing on improvements to electrical servicing for larger buildings has also now launched.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Shifting to overhead service: Prior to the approval of multiplex zoning (R1-1), nearly all electrical connections for 3+ unit housing were underground. Relative to overhead connections, underground connections take longer to design and build, are more expensive, and often require a ground-mounted transformer to be sited on the property. Based on a sampling of multiplex projects, underground service connections can cost between \$22,000 and \$130,000 per project compared to between \$2,000 and \$16,000 for overhead connections. For timelines, BC Hydro's intake to energization process can take between 45 to 61 weeks for underground services, while overhead services can be completed in 23 to 27 weeks.

Since the approval of multiplex zoning, the City and BC Hydro have shifted their approach to prioritize overhead services with an overhead transformer, wherever feasible. BC Hydro's

design standards now reflect this shift to overhead servicing and enable new poles and overhead transformers to be installed when needed. Since February 2025, the rate of fully overhead electrical servicing rose from 43% of multiplex applications to 73% (Appendix).

Process Improvements: Prior to the approval of multiplex zoning, new electrical connections were typically requested after the City issued a building permit. Recent process improvements now ensure that the electrical service application process begins early on: either before or in parallel with the building permit application, so that energization is complete before the occupancy permit is issued. The City has also simplified its role in reviewing service connection requests, deferring much of that process to BC Hydro.

Load Management: An important, but often overlooked, tool to avoid triggering larger service connection sizes and reduce connection costs is load management. Prominent examples are devices that share the loads from multiple electric vehicles so that the peak load from EV charging is lower than if they each charged independently. The City has developed a [Multiplex Load Management Guide](#) to support builders in reducing electrical needs through power-efficient design and load management strategies. The guide is now being shared widely with builders and designers, with interest from other local governments in using it for their communities as well.

Servicing and Policy Changes: Updates to BC Hydro's Distribution Extension Policy (DEP) have reduced electrical connection costs beginning July 2025. While cost reductions vary by site, a BC Hydro case study estimated a reduction of over \$1,000 per unit in distribution system connection costs for a multiplex with underground service under the new policy. When paired with overhead service, connection costs would fall further. BC Hydro has also expanded access to its Express Connect Program to streamline the connection process for simple connections.

NEXT STEPS

The following steps are underway to further improve the multiplex service connection process:

1. Sharing expected timelines for overhead and underground services to help builders understand the steps, the process timeline, and opportunities to shorten the process.
2. Expanding efforts to promote load management solutions to increase the likelihood of overhead servicing.
3. Understanding and removing, where possible, remaining barriers to overhead servicing.

A separate issue relating to electrical servicing is the stop work orders that have been issued for some multiplexes and larger laneway homes encroaching on BC Hydro distribution infrastructure. In addition to working with BC Hydro and the impacted applicants to resolve the near-term problems, staff are also reviewing external communications to identify opportunities to more clearly highlight setback requirements related to power infrastructure.

Work is also underway to reduce timelines and costs for service connections in larger buildings. Staff will update Council on this next phase of work in 2026.

Please feel free to contact me at josh.white@vancouver.ca if you have any questions.



Josh White
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APPENDIX

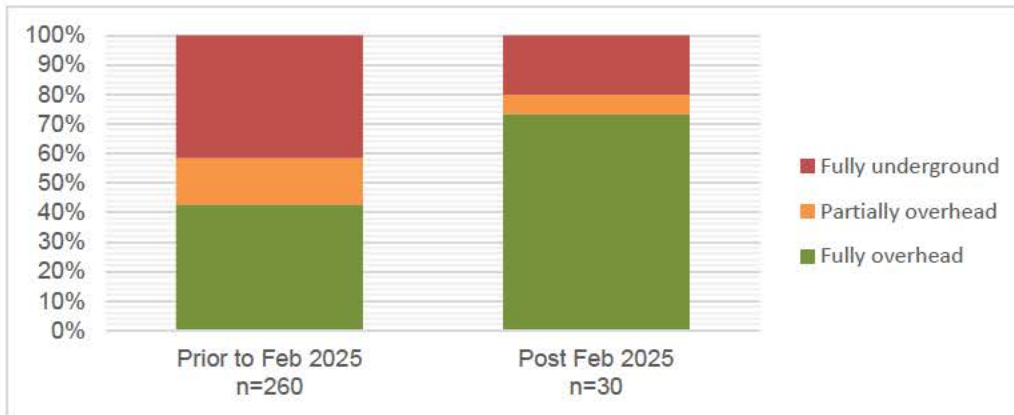


Figure 1: Electrical servicing in multiplexes before and after policy and process improvements