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January 13, 2017

Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities  
Prince Charles Building  
120 Torbay Road  
St. John's, NL A1A 5B2

**Attention: Ms. Cheryl Blundon**  
**Director of Corporate Services & Board Secretary**

Dear Ms. Blundon:

**Re: 2013 Amended General Rate Application - Key Account Management Report in compliance with Board Order No. P.U. 49(2016)**

In response to Board Order No. P.U. 49(2016), please find attached a report providing an update on the implementation of Hydro's Key Account Management Framework.

If you have any questions on the enclosed, please contact the undersigned.

Yours truly,

**NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR HYDRO**

Tracey L. Pennell  
Senior Counsel, Regulatory

TLP/lb  
Encl.

cc: Gerard Hayes – Newfoundland Power  
Paul Coxworthy – Stewart McKelvey Stirling Scales  
Melanie Dawe – Browne Fitzgerald Morgan & Avis  
Tom O'Reilly, Q.C. – Vale Newfoundland and Labrador  
Danny Dumaesque

Dennis Browne, Q.C. – Consumer Advocate  
Yvonne Jones, MP Labrador  
Senwung Luk – Olthus, Kleer, Townshend LLP  
Genevieve Dawson – Nunatsiavut Government  
Larry Bartlett – Teck Resources Limited

# **Customer Service Account Management Framework Implementation Update Report**

January 13, 2017



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1 **1.0 Introduction**

2 This report is in response to Order No. P.U.49(2016), wherein the Board of Commissioners of  
3 Public Utilities (the Board) directed Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro (Hydro) to file a report  
4 by January 13, 2017, as to the status of the implementation of its Account Management  
5 Framework, including the designation of key account representatives for Industrial Customers.

6  
7 Recognizing a desire to improve customer service and the experience for its customers, in 2014,  
8 Hydro developed a customer service strategy for the period 2015 – 2017 (the Customer Service  
9 Strategy). The purpose of the Customer Service Strategy is to outline a strategic roadmap for  
10 customer service at Hydro from 2015 - 2017. The report, entitled “Customer Service Strategic  
11 Roadmap 2015 - 2017”, filed with the Board on September 30, 2014, describes a vision for  
12 improving service to Hydro’s industrial, utility, and retail customers. The report also identifies  
13 the vision, supporting strategies, and guiding principles to meet Hydro’s current business needs  
14 and support long-term customer service strategies.

15  
16 Hydro’s Customer Service vision aligns with the best practices of many other customer focused  
17 organizations. Hydro is working toward a set of best practices that allows Hydro to:

- 18 1) Have clear customer service strategies and make customer service a priority;
- 19 2) Have customer engagement with strong relationships;
- 20 3) Streamline its customer service processes; and
- 21 4) Keep pace with customer expectations.

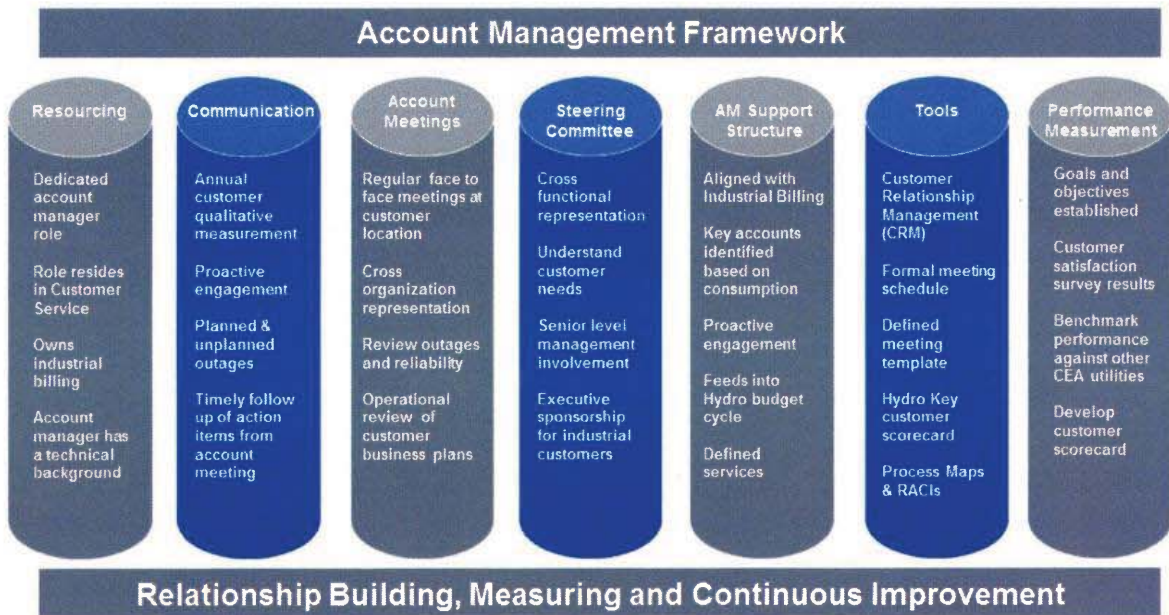
22  
23 One of the initiatives identified by the Customer Service Strategy was the need to develop a  
24 framework for integrated account management for commercial and key customers. In 2015,  
25 Hydro executed that initiative and developed an Account Management Framework (the  
26 Framework) to assist it in developing an approach with respect to its key customers. The  
27 Framework was implemented in 2016.

1 **2.0 Key Account Management Framework**

2 Key account management is a systematic approach to managing a set of customers to maximize  
 3 value and achieve mutually beneficial goals. It involves developing a plan for managing the  
 4 long-term relationships with identified customers to ensure that the expectations, needs, plans,  
 5 and preferred communications channels are documented, well understood, and addressed.  
 6 Key account management also ensures alignment between the utility and the customer.

7  
 8 Hydro is dedicated to generating and transmitting safe, reliable, least-cost power to all 280,000  
 9 industrial, commercial and residential customers in Newfoundland and Labrador and is  
 10 committed to providing a high level of customer service and satisfaction. Hydro also recognizes  
 11 that its largest customers have unique needs and demands. Hydro’s Key Account Management  
 12 Framework continues to evolve, with the current Framework shown in Figure 1 setting out  
 13 Hydro’s approach to maintaining, managing, and improving Hydro’s relationship with its key  
 14 accounts. Part of this Framework was implemented in 2016, with the remaining to be rolled out  
 15 in 2017.

## Account Management Framework



**Figure 1: Hydro’s Account Management Framework**

1 As show in Figure 1, Hydro’s Account Management Framework consists of pillars which provide  
2 the structure required for Hydro to establish strong business relationships and trust with its key  
3 customers. It is designed for active and continuous engagement between both parties and  
4 allows for increased visibility of Hydro management to its customer base for budget and system  
5 planning criteria.

7 The goals of the Key Account Management Framework, as shown in Figure 2, are:

- 8 1) To understand customer drivers;
- 9 2) To have an awareness of the customers’ business plans, allowing for the  
10 development and execution of a strategic action plan;
- 11 3) To set key indicators on how Hydro is performing in the area of customer service;  
12 and
- 13 4) To enhance all customer interactions with Hydro.



15 **Figure 2: Goals of the Account Management Framework**

### 17 **2.1 Manager, Key Accounts**

18 An essential requirement identified in Hydro’s Account Management Framework was the  
19 creation of a dedicated account manager within Hydro’s Customer Service department.

1 Prior to establishing the role, a qualitative survey was conducted with a number of customers  
2 to capture input and gain insights into the requirements of its largest customers.<sup>12</sup> The results  
3 of this survey will serve as an input for the Manager, Key Accounts as work continues within the  
4 account framework and will be a valuable source for account development plans.

5  
6 In Q4 2015, a full time position, Manager, Key Accounts, was created within the Customer  
7 Service Department. This position was successfully filled in May 2016 and is the representative  
8 for all of Hydro's Industrial Customers as well as other identified key commercial accounts. The  
9 Manager, Key Accounts proactively engages with customers on key service and business areas,  
10 such as; commercial arrangements, outage planning, unplanned outage response and follow-  
11 up, future power requirements, business development, and continuous improvement. Figure 3  
12 outlines the key services that the Manager, Key Accounts provides to Hydro's customers.  
13 Acting as a single point of contact between the customer and Hydro allows all interactions to be  
14 managed via a single channel and be filtered throughout the Hydro organization in an efficient  
15 manner. Once a customer request is received by the Manager, Key Accounts, it is their  
16 responsibility to advocate on behalf of the customer within Hydro and pursue a resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> A copy of the Interview Guide is attached in Appendix A: MQO Research Report "Key Account Interview Guide."

<sup>2</sup> A copy of the Survey Research is attached in Appendix B: MQO Research Report "Key Accounts In-depth Research."

## Defined Key Account Services



Figure 3: Services provided by the Manager, Key Accounts

### 1 2.2 Identification of Key Accounts

2 In addition to creating the position of Manager, Key Accounts, Hydro is also in the process of  
3 developing the criteria for designating a customer as a “key account.”

4  
5 Hydro is currently in the pilot stage for identifying which customers are designated as key  
6 accounts. A number of possible criteria include; delivery point voltage, peak demand, revenue,  
7 and critical services. The current pilot list, designated in Q2 2016, includes Newfoundland  
8 Power Inc., all of Hydro’s Industrial Customers, three of the largest revenue generators from  
9 the General Service category, and a datacentre<sup>3</sup>. The current Key Accounts are:

- 10
- Newfoundland Power Inc.
  - 11 • PraxAir Canada Inc.
  - 12 • North Atlantic Refining Limited Refining Limited P.

<sup>3</sup> A data centre was added to the pilot list late in 2016 (December). Hydro is seeing an increased interest for businesses looking to establish data centres. To better understand the requirements and needs of this industry, Hydro saw value in placing a data centre on the key account pilot list.



- 1           • Vale Newfoundland and Labrador Operations
- 2           • Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Ltd.
- 3           • Teck Resources Ltd.
- 4           • Iron Ore Company of Canada
- 5           • Wabush Mines, Cliffs Mining Co.
- 6           • Canadian Forces Base, Department of National Defence
- 7           • Rambler Metals & Mining Canada Ltd.
- 8           • Anaconda Mining Inc.
- 9           • North 53 Degrees Inc.

10

### 11 **2.3 2016 Achievements**

12 In 2016, in support of the Account Management, the following achievements were  
13 accomplished:

- 14           • The Manager, Key Accounts reached out to customers via email and phone, outlining  
15           the new position, its purpose, goals, and available services.
- 16           • Planned service interruptions were coordinated by the Manager, Key Accounts  
17           between Hydro departments and customers. This helped to minimize customer  
18           impacts as agreements were reached on the best schedule for the outages.<sup>4</sup>
- 19           • When unplanned service interruptions occurred, the Manager, Key Accounts  
20           provided feedback to customers both during and after the outage. Post-outage root  
21           cause(s) and mitigating action(s), where appropriate, were provided to the  
22           customers.
- 23           • The Manager, Key Accounts met with seven customers at their facilities. These  
24           meetings included a meet and greet, current and future business discussions, tours  
25           of the facilities, and an account plan development.
- 26           • Five accounts have regularly scheduled account meetings. The frequency of these  
27           meetings vary by customer, and are mutually agreed upon.

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<sup>4</sup> Please see email #3 in Appendix C.

- Two capacity assistance contracts were negotiation and processed with two different key accounts.

## 2.4 2017 Objectives

The Manager, Key Accounts is executing the account framework with each customer. For 2017 the following objectives are targeted:

- 1) Key Account Management Process Document
  - a) Develop Performance Indicators
    - i) high level and per customer
    - ii) planned and unplanned outages
    - iii) reliability statistics (SAIDI/SAIFI)
    - iv) requests received and answered
    - v) request response time
  - 2) Customer Account Development Plan template
    - a) set key account objectives
    - b) develop strategies & tactics
    - c) create the plan
    - d) execute Account Development Plans for each key account
  - 3) Complete Industrial Customer Interconnection Process Document
  - 4) Complete Large General Service Customer Interconnection Process Document
  - 5) Host Key Account Meetings

## 3.0 Conclusion

The Key Account Management Program continues to evolve within Hydro. Informed feedback from Hydro's current key accounts indicate that customers are seeing added customer service

- 1 value and have embraced the opportunity to have one single point of contact.<sup>5</sup> Hydro looks
- 2 forward to continuing to strengthen its service with its customers.

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<sup>5</sup>Please refer to Appendix C: Examples of email correspondence received from customers.

## **Appendix A: Interview Guide**

# KEY ACCOUNT INTERVIEW GUIDE

## Introduction

Good morning/afternoon,

As you know, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is dedicated to generating and transmitting safe, reliable, least-cost power to all 280,000 industrial, commercial and residential customers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Hydro is committed to customer service and satisfaction – and to help them to serve their customers better, they have commissioned MQO Research to engage their key customers in an interview to provide feedback on their current services and highlight important issues.

Your input is very important and will help Hydro understand what is important to you and feed into the development of a key accounts management plan that NL Hydro are currently developing.

Do you have any questions before we start?

## Meeting Needs

1. Is Hydro currently meeting the needs of your company? How so? Do you have needs they are not currently meeting?
2. What would you consider Hydro's strengths when providing your services? Where do you see opportunities for improvement?

## Customer Service

On a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the customer service you receive from NL Hydro?

- a. Why do you say this? (account billings, outages, infrastructure upgrades and inquiries – toll free number)
3. Have you had any particular good or bad experiences with Hydro's customer service?
4. Do you know who to contact or do you have a single point of contact at NL Hydro when your company needs to reach someone about your services?
5. How would you rate Hydro on its response time to your inquiries?
  - a. What is your expectation on response time?

6. Are you familiar with the maintenance programs that Hydro carries out on its infrastructure to ensure the availability and reliability of your power?
7. Hydro is interested in improving their client's overall customer service experience... do you have any suggestion on how can they improve their efforts?

### **Account Management**

8. Hydro is currently developing an Account Management Program for key customers. What would you like to see an Account Management Program include? (*personal service, primary point of contact, proactive engagement, one-on-one meetings, continuous improvement, performance*)
9. What issues would you like an Account Manager to focus on?  
(*quality power, service reliability, advance notice of outages, executive visibility, understanding of Hydro's business, future energy needs of the company, billings, energy efficiency*)
10. How often would you like to meet with an Account Manager regarding your services or for future planning?
11. What information do you think Hydro should collect to measure the success of an Account Management Program?

### **Billing**

12. Are Hydro's bills easy for you to understand? If no, why not?

### **Energy Efficiency**

13. Do you feel that Hydro provides you with enough information/programs to make your organization more energy efficient?
  - a. Are you aware of any programs that could help reduce your energy cost?
14. Have you availed of Hydro's energy efficiencies programs?
  - a. If not, do you intend to?

### **Communication**

15. On a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the communication you receive from Hydro?
  - a. Why do you say this? (*service reliability, outages, notification of restoration, ability to provide sufficient energy for the future*)
16. Hydro is interested in improving their overall communication with key customers... how can they improve their communication efforts?

- a. Hydro is specifically interested in how they can improve the way they communicate when there is an outage that affects your company. Do you have any suggestions?
- b. Do you feel Hydro currently communicates adequately during an unplanned outage?
- c. How frequently would you like to receive updates during outages?
- d. When Hydro does have a planned or unplanned outage do you feel Hydro meet its estimated time to restore service?

### **Overall**

17. In general, on a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the services you receive from Hydro?
  - a. Why do you say this?
18. Based on what you know or have heard, how would you rate Hydro's overall reputation, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is a 'very bad reputation' and 10 is a 'very good reputation'?
  - a. Why do you say this?
19. Are there any services not currently offered by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro that you feel should be offered that could benefit your company? (examples)
20. Do you believe Hydro operates in a socially and environmentally responsible manner?

### **Closing**

21. We have come to the end of the interview. Do you have any other comments or questions that would be beneficial to the success of NL Hydro?

Thank you for your participation.

## **Appendix B: Survey Research**





## Key Accounts In-depth Research

Completed by: MQO Research  
December 2015

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## 1.0 Introduction

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Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is dedicated to generating and transmitting safe, reliable, least-cost power to all 280,000 industrial, commercial and residential customers in Newfoundland and Labrador. Hydro is also committed to customer service and satisfaction. In order to assess Hydro's current status and help serve their customers better, Hydro commissioned MQO Research to engage their key customers to provide feedback on their current services and highlight issues of importance.

Due to the nature of the project, the small number of potential participants, and the depth of understanding desired, a qualitative approach was taken to meet the research objectives of this study. In-depth interviews were conducted with Hydro's largest customers to capture input to feed into a continuous improvement program and gain insights to inform their new key account management plan.

On average, interviews were 30 minutes in length were conducted with management level representatives. A list of potential participants was provided to MQO Research by Hydro. MQO Research contacted all potential participants to outline the project and invite them to participate. A total of 16 companies were approached for this study, with 13 participating. Interviews were conducted by telephone at pre-arranged appointment times. The interviews were conducted during the month of November, 2015 with the exception of the final interview which took place on December 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The table below provides a list of interviewees who participated in the study.

Table 1: Interviewee List

Name	Organization
Todd Cole	Corner Brook Pulp and Paper Ltd.
Ed Sharpe	Labrador-Grenfell Regional Health Authority
Dan Harris	North Atlantic Refining Ltd.
Barry Hiller	Iron Ore Company Of Canada
Norm Williams	Rambler Metals & Mining
Aiden Carey	Labrador Iron Mines
Barry Vincent	Ocean Choice International
Jason Callan	VALE
Rob Pilgrim	5 Wing Goose Bay
Allan Cramm	Anaconda Mining Inc.
Robert Grubb	Praxair Canada Inc.
Phil Barnes	Fogo Island Co-Op Society Ltd.
Larry Marks	Deer Lake Power

The companies that were contacted but did not participate in the research include:

- Labrador Choice Seafood Inc.
- Teck – Duck Pond
- Cliffs Natural Resources

The interview guide was developed in consultation with, and approved by, Hydro. Discussion topics included:

- Meeting customer's needs;
- Customer service;
- Account management;
- Billing;
- Energy Efficiency
- Communication; and
- Overall service: satisfaction and impressions of Hydro.

For reference, a copy of the interview guide is presented as Appendix A.

This report outlines the key themes and insights from interviews with key Hydro customers. There are comments from the interviews used throughout the report. These emphasize a particular point or bring a sense of emotion to the discussion.

## 2.0 Meeting Needs

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In order to get an overall sense of the needs of key customers, all interviews started with asking people if Hydro was currently meeting the needs of their company. First and foremost, informants all agreed that Hydro is meeting their needs in the sense that Hydro supplies them power. This perception was consistent across informants, however some indicated that while Hydro are meeting their current needs, they are at their maximum allotment of power and are unable to expand operations. Others indicated that while most of the times Hydro is meeting their energy needs, a consistent criticism was the lack of reliability. Power outages interrupt their services and in many circumstances have a large financial impact on their companies. It is noted however, many informants felt that Hydro has gotten better at meeting their energy demands within the past 3-5 years.

**“They meet our energy requirements so there is nothing more we really need.”**

**“They are meeting our existing energy needs but we are maxed out in terms of what we can so... at this point we cannot expand our infrastructure.”**

**“We have a history of at least one power failure a year and this is not acceptable when you look at the financial impact to the company.”**

One informant went in to detail on a specific long-term contract issue with the service their company receives from Hydro. This issue will not be discussed here due to confidentiality reasons but will be verbalized to Hydro upon receipt of this report.

Hydro's main strengths that were cited by informants included:

- Their product (i.e., energy),
- Strong engineering design,
- Communications and amount of notice for a planned outage,
- Safety and professionalism of employees.

On the flip side, weakness of Hydro cited included:

- Load restrictions,
- Lack of timeliness when responding to inquiries,
- Lack of collaboration with their key customers,
- Not talking with their customers in advance of a planned outage to find out the most optimal time for the outage.

### 3.0 Customer Service

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To begin the conversation around customer service, informants were asked to rate how satisfied they were with Hydro's customer service using a 10-point scale (where 1 was not satisfied at all and 10 was very satisfied). These ratings were used as a starting point to understand the tone of the group and should not be considered a quantitative or precise measure.

The average rating on customer service was an 8, with a range of 5.5 to 10. Generally, the comments are consistent across companies with informants indicating that they have had good experiences and few complaints. Informants noted that Hydro does a good job at returning calls, providing answers when needed, and giving companies a heads up when there is a planned power outage. Many of the informants also noted that the level of customer service at Hydro has increased over the past few years.

There were a few criticisms of note: one company expressed that there was little in the way of customer service unless initiated by the customer themselves, and another reported that Hydro was the least engaging of all of their service providers.

**"They are not perfect but are doing pretty good."**

**"It is sometimes difficult when trying to find an answer to a question – they could be better."**

**"I deal with a lot of companies. Hydro is easy."**

**"Not aware of any customer services that wasn't initiated by us."**

**Response time:** Informants were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with Hydro's response time to an inquiry. The average rating was 7.5 with a range of 5 to 10. There were mixed results as most of the informants felt that Hydro does as well as can be expected and responds to inquires in a timely fashion, while a few felt that they could definitely do better.

For general questions or inquires, informants expressed they would like to hear back from Hydro within a day or two, even if it is just to let them know that someone has their request and is looking in to it. The exact response time would be dependent upon the nature of the request.

There was a consistent finding that during unplanned outage customers wanted to be notified immediately. They want to know what the issue is or at least that someone is trying to find out what the issue is and how long until the power is restored. Informants highlighted the importance of this update as it helps them make decisions such as whether to send home staff or if they are going to need to find a place to store product to decrease waste. Informants also expressed that they would expect an email once an hour with an update so they can get workers back when the power is restored.

For a planned outage informants agreed that they should get ample notice (e.g., a few months) in advance to prepare for the outage. When the outage occurs informants would like to be notified of the outage and the estimated time of restoration. They would only need to be notified again if the estimated timelines will not be met. Informants did express that they should be consulted on the timing in advance of a planned outage to minimize the impact on their companies (e.g., if possible try to conduct maintenance at a low time of production).

**Experiences:** We also asked informants to recall specific experiences, both good and bad, when working with Hydro. While most experiences mentioned were general, specific good experiences included:

- sharing infrastructure and working together on upgrades
- taking responsibility for productivity loss
- helping out on claims.

The bad experiences noted were not surprising:

- Major outages causing companies to lose significant amounts of money,
- Slow response times to inquiries,
- Slow to follow-up on repairs (e.g., transformer down),
- Updating of contract.

“We have a good meeting with management last year to talk about planning for the future.”

“We had a large outage this year that lost us a lot of money and caused a lot of grief. We will be submitting a claim to Hydro for some of the costs. We have had good and bad experiences with them taking responsibility.”

“We have had a transformer down since February – luckily it hasn't caused us any issues yet.”

A specific company highlighted that they would like to renegotiate their contract as currently their rate is much higher than other companies in the area. The informant noted that while the company would prefer to be using Hydro's energy, currently it is more cost effective to use diesel.

**Point of contact:** Although Hydro has heard that customers are finding it difficult to get in touch with the correct person when inquiring at Hydro, almost all informants in this key customer group felt this was not true. All but one informant reported either having a single point of contact at Hydro or using the contact center when requiring information. These informants indicated that in general their company has no issues when making contact with Hydro.

When asked for suggestion on how Hydro can improve their customer service responses included:

- Providing a direct contact number to someone with knowledge of their operations.
- Facilitate pre-planning discussions with companies to try to optimize planned outages (e.g., schedule for low productivity months if possible).
- Work with companies to come up with innovative ideas that can benefit both sides.
- Review contracts and look for savings or price decreases.
- Develop an email listing to keep people up-to-date when an issue occurs.

## 4.0 Account Management

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When it comes to developing an account management plan, it was universally thought to be a good idea - all informants expressed that they felt both Hydro and their company would benefit by having a closer relationship. There was a consistent feeling throughout the interviews on what customers would like to see in an account management plan, such as a knowledgeable person that can be a liaison between the individual companies and Hydro. A common perception was that this account manager should:

- be the primary point person for Hydro,
- be familiar with the individual company's business (e.g., future energy needs, peaks and troughs),
- facilitate meetings with the correct teams as needed at Hydro,
- contact companies directly when there is an outage and provide updates,
- provide updates on what Hydro is doing to maintain and upgrade their energy services,
- be involved during contract negotiations, and
- promote energy efficiency initiatives.

One informant highlighted that their company had spent a great deal of time recently working with lawyers during the recent PUB hearing. It was the informant's experience that the process was highly time-consuming and costly for an individual company to contribute to, and for what was felt to be limited benefit. It was suggested that that an account management plan should include a process for

Hydro to work with their key accounts to keep companies informed on the PUB and the impacts on their company.

Most informants generally agreed that they would like to meet with an account manager face-to-face once or twice a year for planning purposes. A few of the larger companies felt they would benefit from meeting with the account manager more frequently, such as quarterly. A few of the smaller customers noted that face to face would be nice but probably not needed.

There was considerable agreement on the topics that the account manager should focus on. These included: strategic planning (e.g., energy requirements, expansion plans, and planned outages), understanding and increasing reliability of power/outages, and advocating energy efficiency.

“They don’t have to be technical. They just really have to have the connections inside Hydro and know how to get things done.”

“We need someone that knows Hydro’s operation and how their operation affects us. They should have the ability to work with both companies to mitigate the impact”

“Keep us informed with timely notifications of any change in their structure, programming, and billing rates to help us plan our operations.”

“An account manager should understand our energy needs and try to ensure the reliability.”

**Performance measurement:** Respondents were also asked to give suggestions on measures of success that the account management plan should include. While some respondents were unable to think of any, informant mentions included:

- # of contacts made,
- # of in-person meetings held,
- # of larger meetings facilitated (with other people at Hydro),
- # of inquires responded to/issues resolved,
- level of customer satisfaction with account manager/Hydro
- # of targets developed and goals met (e.g., decreasing demand)
- ability to increase energy allotment
- abnormalities in power distribution identified and resolved
- reliability statistics



## 5.0 Communication

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One specific area that Hydro is interested in improving on is their communications. When asked, the average rating of Hydro's communications was very similar to that of customer service - the average rating was 7.5 with a range of 6 to 9.

Fundamentally, most informants were quiet happy with the communications they receive from Hydro, with many informant reporting that the communications have improved over the past 1-2 years. Informants praised Hydro's communications regarding local Hydro staff being available to answer questions by email, text or phone calls. Others reported attending regular meetings with Hydro staff, and others gave had good feedback about the ease reaching out to the contact center and being provided the information they needed quickly.

**Planned outages:** It is noteworthy to point out that while most informants were happy with the communications from Hydro, there were a few criticisms around planned outages. A few informants indicated they were not being informed of planned outages and when the issue should be resolved.

There were very few suggestions around how to increase communication efforts specifically for outages. Suggestions included giving as much notice as possible, discussing timelines for outages to mitigate impact on customers, and sending text and email updates both leading up to the outage and with updates during the outages.

A common timeline was seen through all informants. For a planned outage, all informants wanted the most advanced notice as possible and an estimated timeline for restoration. If the project is on schedule and the power will be restored around the approximate time given then no follow-up is needed. However, if the planned outage will be shorter or longer they would like to be updated so they can plan accordingly to contact their workers.

“Communications around planned outages are good. We are made aware if there will be an outage and how it will affect us.”

“We get planned outage notices but don't usually hear from Hydro when it is unplanned.”

“We don't get notified during an unplanned outage, but we call the call center and our issues usually get rectified.”

“They need to work on communications during unplanned outages – they just need to let us know they are working on it. We shouldn't have to call.”

**Unplanned outages:** While informants were very positive about Hydro's communications around planned outages, they were a little less positive around unplanned outages. Most informants reported that when the power goes down they do not usually hear anything directly from Hydro. Informants usually go online to check the status or call the control center to find out what is going on.

Suggestions for improvement of communications around unplanned outages mainly included a phone call to the main contact responsible as soon as Hydro is aware there is an outage. Although Hydro may not be aware of the cause yet, informants said it would be useful just to know that Hydro is working on it and that they will follow-up within an hour with more details. All informants felt that with an unplanned power outage it is more important for Hydro to be in touch on an hourly basis with an update. This is important so that managers can get determine when people can get back to work or if they have to take steps to mitigate (e.g., have product moved so it doesn't spoil). One informant reported that an update is necessary every 15-30 minutes, so they are ready to start production as soon as the power is restored.

Similarly, most informants felt that in general Hydro were very good at estimating the time of restoration of service when the outage was planned; while estimates around restoration maybe more inaccurate when an unplanned outages occurs, which informants agreed that is to be expected. Two companies expressed dissatisfaction with estimated time to restore and felt that with more frequent updates on the status the issue could be mitigated.

## 6.0 Other Topics: Billing, Energy Efficiency & Reputation

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**Billing:** Virtually everyone agreed that the billings structure was "good" or "fine". There was a consensus that the bills are easy to read and understand.

A few informants did reference frustration with having energy costs estimated – it was perceived that key customers should be prioritized as the change from month to month can be substantial. Another criticism was around the demand charge the month of a power outage. One informant felt strongly that a demand charge is in place to guarantee them a specific amount of power. However, if that power is not available to them for the whole month and the company loses money due to a power failure, they should not have to pay the demand fee.

**Energy Efficiency:** Responses regarding Hydro's role in promoting energy efficiency were mixed. While just over half the participants said they felt that Hydro provided them with enough information/programs to make their organization more energy efficient, only three were actually aware of and used energy efficiency programming supported by Hydro.

Of the participants that were unaware of Hydro's energy efficiency programming, all, with the exception of two, felt that they could benefit from the programming and requested to receive follow-up

information. The remaining informants noted that their buildings were fairly new and already energy efficient.

**Reputation:** Informants were asked to rate Hydro's reputation but most felt it was hard to answer because the public's perception of Hydro didn't necessarily reflect the company's opinion of Hydro or their relationship with the company. With this in mind, the average rating was 7.1 out of 10, with a range of 4-8. Low scores were mainly associated with the public's lack of trust in Hydro due to the low reliability of household power within the past few years. Some informants pointed out that they felt Hydro does a great job and are very professional but the reputation score was more based on public opinions.

All respondents felt that Hydro acted in both an environmentally and socially responsible manner.

## 7.0 Overall Service

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The key informants were very helpful in understanding the main issues impacting their companies and the things they would like to see from Hydro.

To end the interviews, informants were asked to rate the overall service they received from Hydro. The average rating was a 7.8 with a range of 4-9. As throughout the previous topics, informants were positive regarding their service from Hydro. The rating of 4 was based upon a power outage that lost millions of dollars.

Informants were also given an opportunity to give suggestions and recommendations around the services they would like to see Hydro offer to them as key customers. While most informants were unable to answer, responses given include:

- Looking at opportunities to cost share a power back up supply for companies.
- Facilitation of discussions between the key accounts and the PUB to help decrease overall cost.
- Working with companies to ensure infrastructure is up to date to provide the best possible service.
- Providing an avenue for key accounts to work with Hydro and other stakeholders to expand productivity to increase sales for both the client and Hydro.

“The more successful we are the more energy we use and the more money Hydro makes – we need to be innovative – Hydro should help us expand our production.”

“Hydro should keep us informed of what the PUB is doing, who it effects, and what we need to be doing.”

“They need to pay attention to our main infrastructure – new substation would really help reliability.”

## Appendix A: Discussion Guide

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## KEY ACCOUNT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Good morning/afternoon,

As you know, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro is dedicated to generating and transmitting safe, reliable, least-cost power to all 280,000 industrial, commercial and residential customers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Hydro is committed to customer service and satisfaction – and to help them to serve their customers better, they have commissioned MQO Research to engage their key customers in an interview to provide feedback on their current services and highlight important issues.

Your input is very important and will help Hydro understand what is important to you and feed into the development of a key accounts management plan that NL Hydro are currently developing.

Do you have any questions before we start?

### Meeting Needs

1. Is Hydro currently meeting the needs of your company? How so? Do you have needs they are not currently meeting?
2. What would you consider Hydro's strengths when providing your services? Where do you see opportunities for improvement?

### Customer Service

On a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the customer service you receive from NL Hydro?

- a. Why do you say this? (account billings, outages, infrastructure upgrades and inquiries – toll free number)
3. Have you had any particular good or bad experiences with Hydro's customer service?
4. Do you know who to contact or do you have a single point of contact at NL Hydro when your company needs to reach someone about your services?

5. How would you rate Hydro on its response time to your inquiries?
  - a. What is your expectation on response time?
6. Are you familiar with the maintenance programs that Hydro carries out on its infrastructure to ensure the availability and reliability of your power?
7. Hydro is interested in improving their client's overall customer service experience... do you have any suggestion on how can they improve their efforts?

### **Account Management**

8. Hydro is currently developing an Account Management Program for key customers. What would you like to see an Account Management Program include? (*personal service, primary point of contact, proactive engagement, one-on-one meetings, continuous improvement, performance*)
9. What issues would you like an Account Manager to focus on?  
(*quality power, service reliability, advance notice of outages, executive visibility, understanding of Hydro's business, future energy needs of the company, billings, energy efficiency*)
10. How often would you like to meet with an Account Manager regarding your services or for future planning?
11. What information do you think Hydro should collect to measure the success of an Account Management Program?

### **Billing**

12. Are Hydro's bills easy for you to understand? If no, why not?

### **Energy Efficiency**

13. Do you feel that Hydro provides you with enough information/programs to make your organization more energy efficient?
  - a. Are you aware of any programs that could help reduce your energy cost?
14. Have you availed of Hydro's energy efficiencies programs?
  - a. If not, do you intend to?

## Communication

15. On a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the communication you receive from Hydro?
  - a. Why do you say this? (service reliability, outages, notification of restoration, ability to provide sufficient energy for the future)
16. Hydro is interested in improving their overall communication with key customers... how can they improve their communication efforts?
  - a. Hydro is specifically interested in how they can improve the way they communicate when there is an outage that affects your company. Do you have any suggestions?
  - b. Do you feel Hydro currently communicates adequately during an unplanned outage?
  - c. How frequently would you like to receive updates during outages?
  - d. When Hydro does have a planned or unplanned outage do you feel Hydro meet its estimated time to restore service?

## Overall

17. In general, on a scale from 1 – 10, where 1 is not satisfied at all and 10 is very satisfied, how satisfied are you with the services you receive from Hydro?
  - a. Why do you say this?
18. Based on what you know or have heard, how would you rate Hydro's overall reputation, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is a 'very bad reputation' and 10 is a 'very good reputation'?
  - a. Why do you say this?
19. Are there any services not currently offered by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro that you feel should be offered that could benefit your company? (examples)
20. Do you believe Hydro operates in a socially and environmentally responsible manner?

## Closing

21. We have come to the end of the interview. Do you have any other comments or questions that would be beneficial to the success of NL Hydro?

Thank you for your participation.

## **Appendix C: Examples of email correspondence from customers**



## Examples of Email Correspondence Received From Customers

1. Email correspondence received 01/01/2017 10:05 PM.

*Thank you team.*

*A good example of open communication and mutual collaboration.*

*Thanks for this.*

2. Email correspondence received 12/16/2016 02:27 PM.

*It was very nice meeting you two yesterday and look forward to working together in the future.*

3. Email correspondence received 11/17/2016 08:59 AM.

*Thanks for the excellent communication, it definitely assists us in making decisions here at site.*