Q. Please describe if there were any situations in which callers in the High Volume Call Answering ("HVCA") would have timed out in the HVCA while waiting for a queue during the January outage event. Please describe the cycles of waiting within the HVCA and what happens and related customer messaging when the wait period exceeds the design limitations of HVCA, especially describe the caller experience.

A. Newfoundland Power's HVCA system includes an Interalia XMU+ appliance which is integrated directly into the Company's telecommunications service providers ("BellAliant") telephone exchange.[1] During the major electrical system events and subsequent outages that occurred during the January 2-8, 2014 period, no customer calls to Newfoundland Power's Interalia XMU+ HVCA timed out due to capacity limitations.

Newfoundland Power's Interalia XMU+ HVCA does not operate with multiple cycles of waiting periods. Rather, customer calls are queued in the Interalia XMU+ HVCA for a maximum of 58 seconds until an outage message is played.[2] Newfoundland Power's Interalia XMU+ system has the capacity to queue a total of 255 callers at a time for each of its 8 service areas. During the January 2-8, 2014 period, which saw approximately ¾ of Newfoundland Power customers without power at one time, the HVCA customer calling queue never exceeded its design capacity for any of the Company's 8 service areas.[3]

If more than 255 customers from any one of Newfoundland Power's 8 service areas attempted to queue for outage messages from the HVCA system at once or if the HVCA system failed, customer calls would be directed to Newfoundland Power's Customer Contact Centre.

[1] A description and documentation detailing the technical design, operation, and capacity of the Interalia HVCA is provided in the response to Request for Information PUB-NP-123.

[2] The maximum waiting period of 58 seconds for a customer call on the HVCA corresponds to a maximum length of outage messages played on Newfoundland Power's Interalia XMU+ HVCA. This short message duration allows for concise outage messages to customers and minimizes the possibility that some calls may be blocked due to capacity constraints.

[3] At approximately 9:00 am January 4th, 2014 approximately 188,000 of Newfoundland Power's 255,000 customers were without power (188,000 / 255,000 = 0.737). Attachment C of the response to Request for Information PUB-NP-104 is a report of the performance of the HVCA system during the January 2-8, 2014 event, including the morning of January 4th, 2014.