Q. Please detail the additional telephony capacity (trunks) that have been ordered following the January 2014 outages to improve service within the Contact Centre. Please describe how these additional trunks will increase capacity of the Contact Centre and provide opportunities for redundancies within the Contact Centre technology. Include the analysis that was used to determine the need for additional trunks.

A. ***Additional Telephony Capacity***

Following the January 2-8, 2014 outages, Newfoundland Power reviewed the capacity of the Automated Call Distributor ("ACD") technology to identify opportunities for improving customer service, including reducing wait times and busy signals.[1] Following the review, an additional T1 circuit, totalling 24 additional trunks was ordered from the Company's telecommunications service provider ("BellAliant") to provide extra capacity and redundancy for customers who choose to speak to Newfoundland Power representatives in the Customer Contact Centre ("CCC") or use the Interactive Voice Response ("IVR") system.[2]

Table 1 shows a preliminary design configuration of the T1 circuit that has been ordered from BellAliant.

Table 1
Preliminary Design Configuration of Future T1 Circuit

Trunks	Commitment	Use
10	Dedicated	Outage Calls
3	Multi-purpose	Outage Calls Help Desk[3]
6	Multi-purpose	Outage Calls Central Dispatch[4]
4	Multi-purpose	Help Desk Central Dispatch Outbound calling
1	Dedicated / Redundant	D-Channel control and signalling[5]

1 Newfoundland Power's ACD consists of the Aspect Call Centre technology which has 60 seat licences.

2 A telecommunications trunk refers to a dedicated telephone line between a customer's premises and the telecommunications service provider's telephone exchange network. A T1 circuit refers to 24 telecommunications trunks.

3 Newfoundland Power has an internal *Help Desk* which provides internal information system support to Newfoundland Power employees throughout the Company's service territory.

4 In 2013 Newfoundland Power established a Dispatch Centre to schedule line crew resources throughout the Company's St. John's Region. The Dispatch Centre continues to expand to provide scheduling of line crews throughout other parts of Newfoundland Power's service territory.

5 D-Channel control and signaling refers to internal management of the trunks on T1 circuits. Newfoundland Power decided to configure one trunk for D-Channel control and signaling to provide additional redundancy to the existing D-Channels already in use on Newfoundland Power's ACD system.

Rather than dedicate all trunks to the management of outage calls, Newfoundland Power plans to configure 13 of the trunks for other uses at times when outage calls are not present in large volumes. This allows the company to utilize trunks that would otherwise be dormant for other business needs including dispatching of work, operating the company's Help Desk, and conducting outbound calls.

Analysis for Additional Trunks

Newfoundland Power's ACD system is equipment with a 60 seat licence, meaning that 60 employees can simultaneously receive inbound calls from customers. During the January 11-13, 2013 electrical system events and subsequent customer outages, Newfoundland Power had 3 T1 circuits available on the ACD to take calls from customers.[6] Following the January 11-13, 2013 event, Newfoundland Power increased the capacity to 4 T1 circuits. This increased the number of calls that could be simultaneously offered to the ACD and decreased the likelihood that a customer would receive a busy signal.

Also following the January 11-13, 2013 electrical system events, Newfoundland Power trained additional employees to take incoming outage calls. These employees supplemented the ability of Customer Account Representatives to handle the increased call volumes that would come with additional trunks being connected to the ACD. The additional trunks and utilization of recently trained employees to handle inbound calls contributed to the ¾ reduction in busy signals and overflow messages that occurred in January 2014 when compared to the events of January 2013.[7]

Despite the reduction in busy signals and overflow messages between the January 2013 and January 2014 events, further opportunities to improve the Company's customer service performance were considered. With Newfoundland Power's current ACD configuration, if circumstances require that the full 60 ACD seat licences be utilized, it is possible that only 24 trunks would be available for customers to wait on the line, or queue, for an agent or use the IVR.[8] The small queue size could contribute to high customer overflow. To increase the queue size and subsequently decrease the potential for high volumes of overflow, Newfoundland Power decided to add a fifth T1 circuit to the ACD system. Adding the fifth T1 circuit would essentially double the size of the queue when the ACD is fully utilized and allow more customers to wait on the line for a Newfoundland Power representative or to utilize the IVR.

[6] On January 11th, 2013 an equipment problem at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's Holyrood Thermal Generating Station caused the plant to disconnect from the Island Interconnected System causing approximately 173,000 Newfoundland Power customers to lose power.

[7] Newfoundland Power also trained additional employees to take incoming calls in the Customer Contact Centre during the January 2-8, 2014 period. The Company will conduct refresher training in the fall of 2014 to ensure additional employees are trained and prepared to answer incoming customer calls prior to the 2014 hurricane season and 2014-2015 winter season.

[8] This means that if Newfoundland Power representatives are engaged in telephone interactions with 60 customers at one time, only 24 customers can be standing by on the ACD system.

Telecommunications infrastructure that supports Newfoundland Power's Help Desk and Central Dispatch services is currently provided outside of the Company's ACD system. These services utilize dedicated Centrex lines that connect to BellAliant's telephone exchange. The functionality offered by BellAliant's Centrex system can be improved by moving those services to Newfoundland Power's ACD system.[9] Moving these services to the ACD can also reduce the cost associated with maintaining Centrex lines for the Help Desk and Central Dispatch functions.

Newfoundland Power's ACD system has two D-Channels configured to manage telecommunications traffic between the ACD and BellAliant's telephone exchange. A third D-channel is planned to be configured within the new T1 circuit and will provide additional redundancy for managing the telecommunications traffic.

The addition of a fifth T1 circuit provides a number of advantages to Newfoundland Power. During a major system event that results in significant customer outages, the circuit can be provisioned to increase the capacity of the telecommunications infrastructure at the Customer Contact Center and minimize the risk of overflow and busy signals when customers call. Under normal operations when significant customer outages are not present, the fifth T1 circuit will partially be used to minimize the use of BellAliant Centrex lines and provide additional functionality to Newfoundland Power Help Desk and Central Dispatch services. Finally, by configuring one of the trunks on the fifth T1 circuit as a D-Channel circuit, additional redundancy is added for management of telecommunications traffic between Newfoundland Power and BellAliant.

[9] By transferring the Help Desk telecommunications services to Newfoundland Power's internal ACD system, the Help Desk line can be configured to utilize multiple employees throughout the Company's service territiory at one time.