

Chris Sandve
 Chief Regulatory Officer
bchydroregulatorygroup@bchydro.com

July 31, 2023

Patrick Wruck
 Commission Secretary and Manager
 Regulatory Services
 British Columbia Utilities Commission
 Suite 410, 900 Howe Street
 Vancouver, BC V6Z 2N3

Dear Patrick Wruck:

**RE: British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC or Commission)
 British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority (BC Hydro)
 Fiscal 2024 First Quarter (Q1 F2024)
 Summary Report of Customer Complaints and Consecutive Estimates**

BC Hydro writes to submit its Q1 F2024 Summary Report of Customer Complaints and Consecutive Estimates.

Customer Complaints

Table 1 Total Complaints Volume from All Sources and BCUC

	Q1 2023	Q2 F2023	Q4 F2023	Q4 F2023	Q1 F2024
Total Complaints*	93	137	109	118	115
BCUC	15	24	28	11	21
*Total Complaints include complaints received through the BCUC					

The total number of customer complaints decreased slightly from 118 in Q4 F2023 to 115 in Q1 F2024.

Complaints received through the BCUC increased from 11 in Q4 F2023 to 21 in Q1 F2024, which is above last quarter but is in line with previous years' volumes.

Table 2 Response Time to Customer Complaints

	Q1 F2023	Q2 F2023	Q3 F2023	Q4 F2023	Q1 F2024
Average Response Time (Days)	3	3	3	3	3

The average response time to customer complaints in Q1 F2024 was three days. The majority of complaints were investigated and responded to within five business days. Complex investigations involving multiple departments were investigated and responded to within ten business days.

Table 3 Complaints by Source

	All Sources									
	Q1 F2023		Q2 F2023		Q3 F2023		Q4 F2023		Q1 F2024	
BC Hydro	40	43%	72	53%	43	39%	45	38%	43	37%
BCUC	15	16%	24	18%	28	26%	11	9%	21	18%
Better Business Bureau	4	4%	5	3%	3	3%	7	6%	4	3%
Government*	34	37%	36	26%	34	31%	55	47%	47	42%
Media and Other	0	0%	0	0%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	93	100%	137	100%	109	100%	118	100%	115	100%

*Government represents Office of the Minister, MLA, and Ombudsperson

The largest number of complaints were received through Government with 47 (42% of the total) in Q1 F2024. This is followed by complaints received by BC Hydro with 43 (37% of the total) and the BCUC with 21 (18% of the total).

Of the 47 complaints received through Government in Q1 F2024, 18 were received from MLA offices, 23 from the Office of the Minister, and six from the Ombudsperson's office.

Table 4 Complaints by Category – All Sources

	All Sources									
	Q1 2023		Q2 F2023		Q3F2023		Q4 F2023		Q1 2024	
Credit	20	22%	30	22%	15	14%	20	17%	26	23%
Billing and Payments	13	14%	10	8%	12	11%	27	23%	18	16%
Customer Crisis Fund	5	5%	2	1%	4	4%	3	2%	2	2%
SMI	3	3%	2	1%	4	4%	1	1%	4	3%
Non-Customer Service	33	36%	85	62%	57	51%	47	40%	56	48%
Other	19	20%	8	6%	17	16%	20	17%	9	8%
Total	93	100%	137	100%	109	100%	118	100%	115	100%

Table 5 Complaints by Category – BCUC

	BCUC									
	Q1 F2023		Q2 F2023		Q3 F2023		Q4 F2023		Q1 F2024	
Credit	4	27%	14	58%	3	11%	7	64%	10	48%
Billing and Payments	2	13%	4	17%	4	14%	2	18%	6	29%
Customer Crisis Fund	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
SMI	0	0%	1	4%	2	7%	0	0%	0	0%
Non-Customer Service	7	47%	3	13%	17	61%	2	18%	5	24%
Other	2	13%	2	8%	2	7%	0	8%	0	0%
Total	15	100%	24	100%	28	100%	11	100%	21	100%

The Non-Customer Service category totaled 56 complaints (48% of the total) in Q1 F2024. There were 16 Design complaints, largely related to service connection delays or costs, and 15 Field complaints on a wide range of matters such as vegetation, poles, and damage to BC Hydro equipment. There were five complaints related to Conservation and Energy Management, mainly resulting from program rebates. Of the 20 Other category complaints, seven were due to planned outages and 13 were about Rates, most of which were specifically about how we charge our residential customers.

Of the 21 complaints received by the BCUC in Q1 F2024, six were related to Billing and Payments and ten were related to Credit, five of which were due to disconnections. The five Non-Customer Service category complaints were related to Design and Field, with one Design complaint and four for Field, which included complaints regarding poles, EMF, and a claim for damage to BC Hydro equipment.

Consecutive Estimates

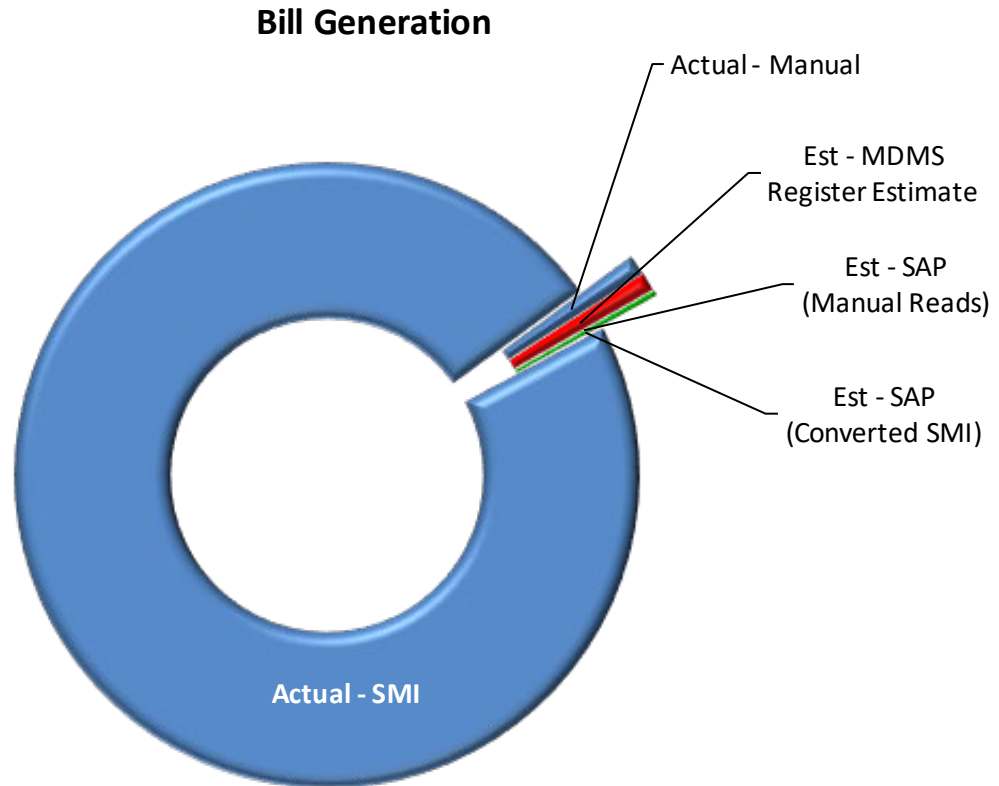
In Q1 F2024, the number of Consecutive Estimates decreased to 6,357 compared to 9,088 in the previous quarter. There were 6,309 Consecutive Estimates that occurred in May, which is the lowest number seen since January 2020. Seasonal trending shows May and June are months where Consecutive Estimates are at their lowest; weather conditions have improved in the North and Interior (allowing for access to exchange failed equipment and read meters without network coverage) and trees have not filled out yet (foliage density impacts the ability of meters to read over the air).

Another contributing factor to the low number of consecutive estimates in the last two months has been a reduction in meters not communicating as a result of failed routers. Typically, there is at least one router with 100 meters or more that contributes to the intermittent communication category on the Consecutive Estimate report and it often takes two months or more to resolve. At the end of May, the greatest number of meters on the Consecutive Estimate report where the root cause was identified as a router issue was 40. Furthermore, January to April 2023 analysis shows an average of 500 meters where the root cause was a router issue, whereas in May there were only 177 (and 315 in June).

For June 2023, 98.8% of bills were issued based on actual reads, which is a 0.2% decrease compared with March 2023. As discussed in our last report, Meter Data Management System (**MDMS**) estimates are now being reported as an estimate (prior to the increase in lookback period in February 2023, MDMS estimates were considered as good as an actual read) causing the decrease in bills based on actual reads. If prior months' bills issued on actual reads were reassessed with all MDMS estimates being considered estimates, the 12-month average is 99.8%.

[Figure 1](#) below identifies the sources of meter reads (converted and manual reads) that received actual versus estimates for June 2023.

Figure 1 Sources of Meter Reads for Invoices Issued, June 2023



Bill Issued Using:	June, 2023		
	Volume	%	%
Actual – SMI	1,462,441	97.8	98.8
Actual – Manual	15,215	1.0	
Estimate – Register Estimate	13,752	0.9	1.2
Est - SAP (Manual Reads)	742	0.0	
Est - SAP (Converted SMI)	3,854	0.3	
Total	1,496,004	100.0	100.0

Note: Total does not reconcile to other tables and figures because:

- Results include all estimates, not just consecutive estimates (i.e., reflects accounts with only one estimate); and
- This view includes bills issued, while the data for other charts is based on the reading of meter registers. In some cases, multiple meter registers are read but a single bill is issued (e.g., a poly-phase meter with scheduled reads for kWh, kW, and kVARh).

Assessment of Meter Reading Performance

In June 2023, 6,357 scheduled meter readings were unable to be obtained for a second billing period in a row. Therefore, the associated accounts required consumption estimates to ensure timely delivery of bills to customers.

Table 6 Consecutive Estimates by Meter Reading Category – Q1 F2024

	Mar 2023	Jun 2023
Accounts with Automated Reads – last read SAP Estimate	2,487	1,947
Accounts with Automated Reads – last read Register Estimate	1,986	1,362
Accounts with Manual Reads – last read SAP Estimate	4,615	3,048
Total	9,088	6,357

SAP estimates that are based on monthly historical data accounted for 4,995 of these bills. The remaining 1,362 were Register Estimates.

The 30% decrease in total Consecutive Estimates this quarter is due to reductions in all estimate categories. MDMS Estimates for meters on automated billing decreased by 31%, SAP estimates for automated meters decreased by 22%, and SAP estimates for manually read meters decreased by 34%. The decrease in Consecutive Estimates for manual reads is consistent with seasonal trends.

Table 7 Causes of Missed Reads by Number of Estimates

Category	2-3 Estimates		4-5 Estimates		6+ Estimates		Grand Total	
	Meters	(%)	Meters	(%)	Meters	(%)	Meters	(%)
Customer Impact Nil / Low								
Vacant	200	7	192	23	1,273	44	1,665	26
Disconnected	55	2	24	3	233	8	312	5
Customer-Side Power Outage	41	2	128	16	866	31	1,035	17
Subtotal	296	11	344	42	2,372	83	3,012	47
Meter Replacement	295	11	132	16	158	5	585	9
Estimated Automated Reads								
Intermittent Comms – MDMS	1,126	42	11	1	9	0	1,146	18
Intermittent Comms – SAP	597	23	67	9	142	5	806	13

Category	2-3 Estimates		4-5 Estimates		6+ Estimates		Grand Total	
	Meters	(%)	Meters	(%)	Meters	(%)	Meters	(%)
Estimated Manual Reads								
Customer Access	77	3	132	15	93	3	302	5
Other	125	5	124	16	93	3	342	5
Recently Unconverted	151	6	10	1	3	0	164	3
Grand Total	2,667	100	820	100	2,870	100	6,357	100

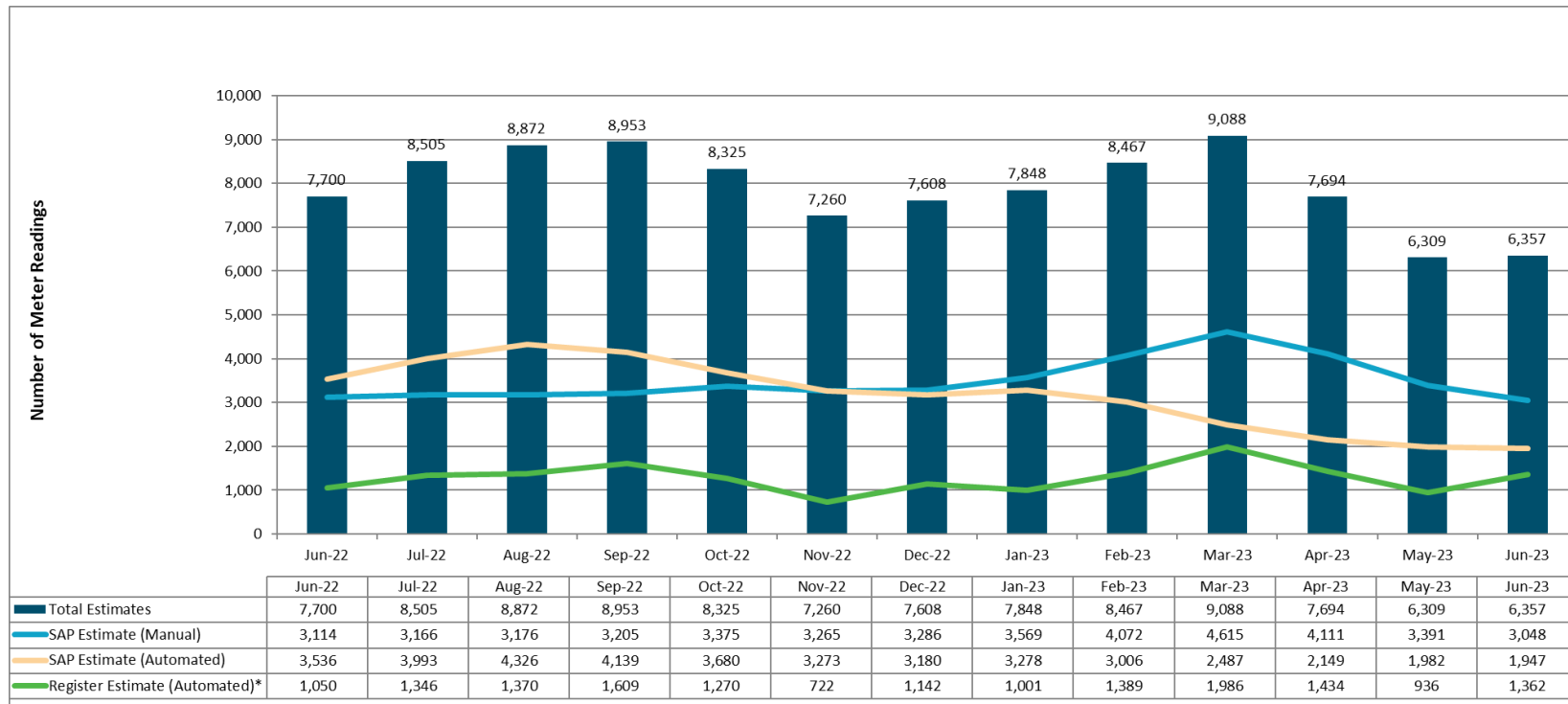
[Table 7](#) above summarizes the causes of all missed meter reads that resulted in bills issued based on consecutive estimates in Q1 F2024, including automated and manually read meters.

BC Hydro assesses that 47% of the estimated meter reads had low or no customer impact. This category includes accounts that are vacant (26%), services with the line side breakers turned off (17%), and disconnected services (5%). The meter replacement category accounts for 9% of consecutive estimates. The majority of these meters have failed and require replacement for an actual read to be obtained. Intermittent communications of automated meters accounted for a further 31% of estimated reads, divided between MDMS estimates (18%) and SAP estimates (13%).

Of the 13% of consecutive estimates which were manually read meters, Customer Access and Other, which each account for 5%, are the most significant categories. Over 60% of Customer Access issues relate to locked gates and key issues, and nearly half of the Other category is due to active wildfires restricting area access. The remaining 3% of manually read meters became consecutive estimates meters while automated and have recently been unconverted so that an actual read can be obtained by one of our field staff.

For those meters with six or more consecutive estimates, the most significant causes are vacant accounts (44%) and customer-side power outages (31%). These two categories, along with disconnected meters (8%), comprise 83% of accounts with six or more consecutive estimates and do not impact customer billing.

Figure 2 Meter Readings Requiring Two or More Consecutive Estimates, June 2022 to June 2023, Converted and Non-Converted Meters



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For further information, please contact Frankie Vaide by email at bchydroregulatorygroup@bchydro.com.

Yours sincerely,



Chris Sandve
Chief Regulatory Officer

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