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ESA # 7012854

2019 Residential Customer Survey

In Quarter 4 2019, Wellington North Power Inc. (WNP) conducted a survey of its Residential customers. The survey questions were prepared by WNP and were available to customers to complete by:

- Accessing using the LDC's website.
- Accessing on-line through Survey Monkey.
- Available at the office counter for walk-in customers.

Survey Objective

The intent of the survey was to capture customers' feedback to assist WNP with business planning for the period 2021 to 2025. The responses will help provide an insight into the services offered by WNP as well better understand the needs and preferences of our customers.

Survey Questions

Survey questions focused on the following themes:

1. Satisfaction;
2. Rating of Service Provided;
3. Power outages;
4. Effectiveness during an Outage;
5. Company profile;
6. Investment priorities;
7. Price and reliability; and
8. Trust.

The Residential customer survey ran from October 4th 2019 to December 31st 2019. By completing the survey, customers were entered into a prize-draw to win one of five \$100 credits to their January 2020 electricity bill.

Survey Promotion

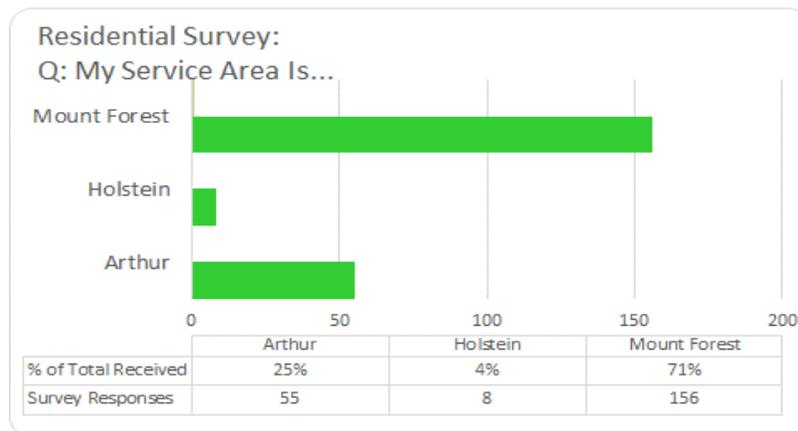
WNP promoted the survey through the following channels:

- a) Bill inserts included with October, November and December bills.
- b) Messages on customers' e-bill for bills issued in October, November and December.
- c) Promoted on Wellington North Power's website.
- d) Weekly messages posted on social media (Facebook and Twitter).
- e) Walk-in customer visits to the LDC's office.

Survey Responses

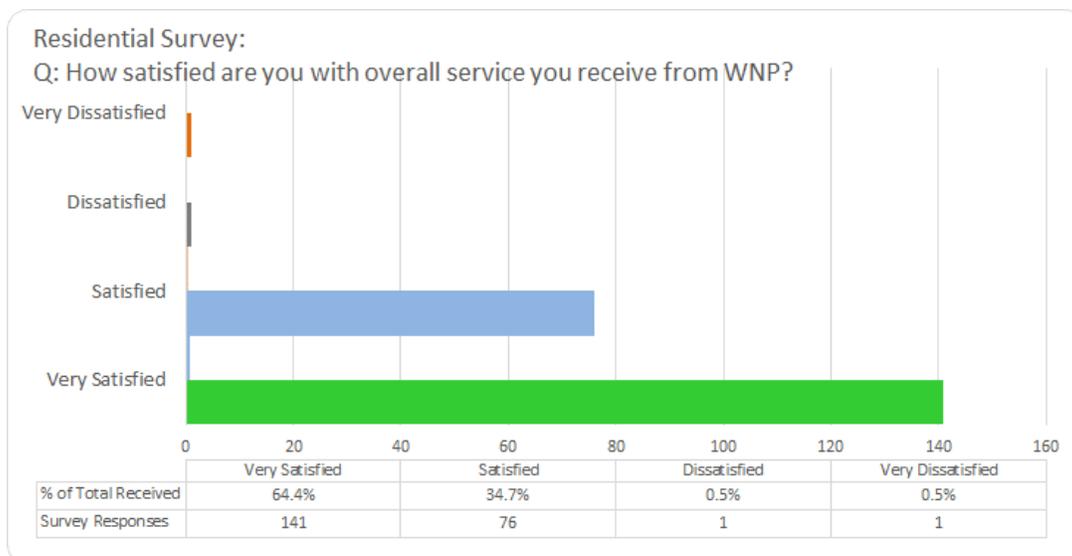
WNP received survey responses from 219 Residential customers. With 3,314 Residential accounts as at December 31st 2019 this represents a 7% response-rate. The LDC acknowledges this response rate is not statistically significant; however the responses do provide valuable feedback to how our customers perceive the services offered by Wellington North Power and assist in preparing capital plans and operating budgets.

WNP operates within three (3) service areas in Wellington North in the urban centers of Arthur, Holsten and Mount Forest. The chart below shows the survey responses received split by the service area:



1. Satisfaction

The chart below summarizes how Residential respondents rate the overall service provided by WNP:



Findings:

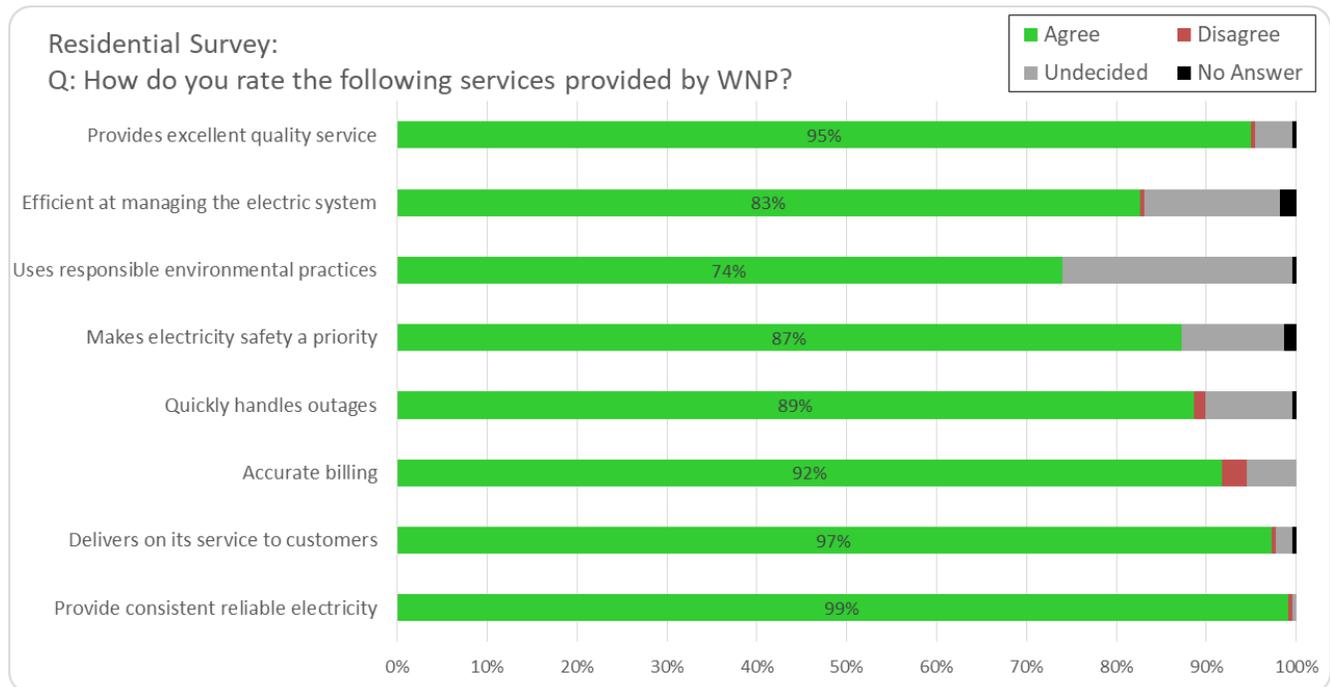
- 99% of respondents rated WNP overall service as either “Very Satisfied” or “Satisfied”.
- 2 customers (1% of the survey population) rated the LDC’s service as “Dissatisfied” or “Very Dissatisfied”. The responder who rated their experience of the LDC as “Very Dissatisfied” did include a comment concerning being charged late payment fees twice as well as receiving numerous alerts about late payments.

For consideration:

WNP is planning to make information available to customers about credit control timelines and customer service rules when the LDC implements the OEB-approved new customer service rules that come into effect in March 2020. This may help inform our customers about the regulatory rules the LDC adheres to and how we are trying to support customers managing their bill payments.

2. Service Rating

Customers were given a series of statements and asked if they “Agree”, “Disagree” or were “Undecided” with each statement. The chart below shows the collated responses:



Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	No Answer	Total
Provide consistent reliable electricity	99.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0.0%	100%
Delivers on its service to customers	97.3%	0.5%	1.8%	0.5%	100%
Accurate billing	91.8%	2.7%	5.5%	0.0%	100%
Quickly handles outages	88.6%	1.4%	9.6%	0.5%	100%
Makes electricity safety a priority	87.2%	0.0%	11.4%	1.4%	100%
Uses responsible environmental practices	74.0%	0.0%	25.6%	0.5%	100%
Efficient at managing the electric system	82.6%	0.5%	15.1%	1.8%	100%
Provides excellent quality service	95.0%	0.5%	4.1%	0.5%	100%

Findings:

- Of the customers that gave a definite response to the statements (i.e. “Agree” or “Disagree”), it could be summarized that customers provided a favourable opinion of the services provided by WNP.
- Reliability, service delivery and quality of service were all rated as “Agreed” by 95% or above of the response population.
- 2.7% of the response population disagreed with the statement the LDC has accurate billing.
- Responses for environmental practices, efficiently manages the electric system and safety as a priority all achieved an “Undecided” response for over 10% of the respondents.
- 87.2% of respondents agreed the LDC makes electricity safety a priority. This result concurs with the most recent ESA Public Safety Awareness survey, conducted in 2017, where the LDC achieved a rating score of 83.3%.

For consideration:

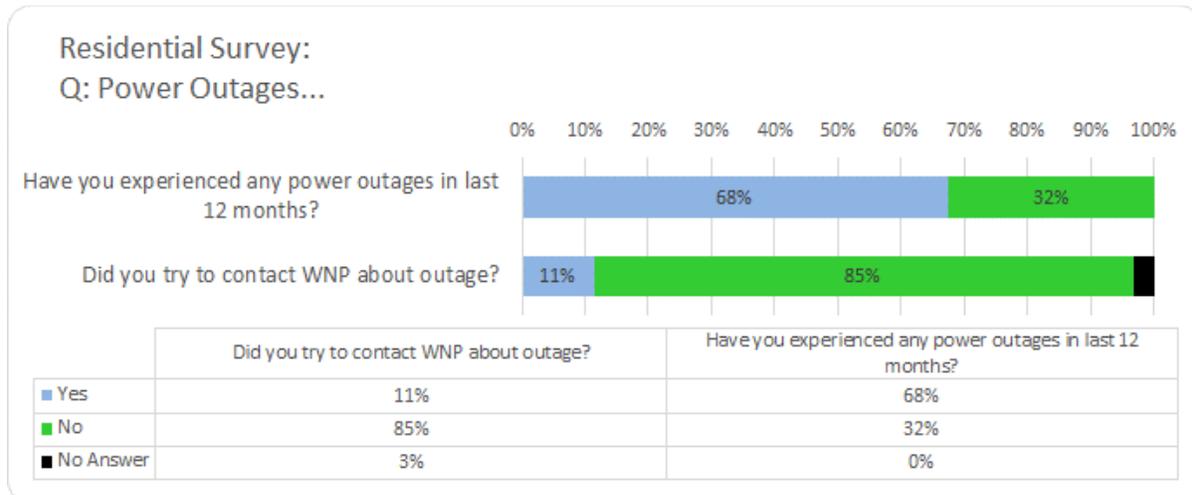
WNP needs to assess how the LDC can better communicate to customers items such as environmental practices and examples of efficient handling of the electricity system. For instance, publishing articles on these items in the local newspaper on a quarterly basis.

3. Power Outages

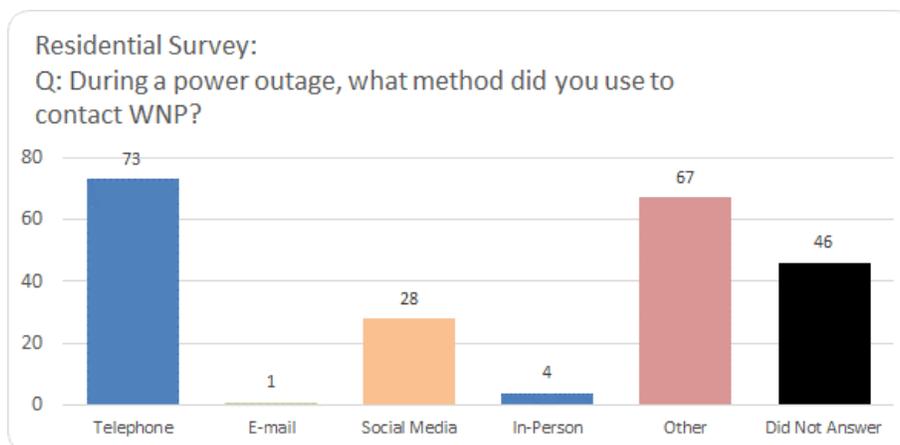
This question asked if customers had experienced a power outage in the past 12 months and during the outage, had they tried to contact WNP.

Findings:

68% respondents had experienced a power outage during the last 12 months with 11% trying to contact WNP during the outage:



During an outage, 73 respondents (33% of the survey population) tried to contact WNP using the telephone whilst 67 people (31%) used an “Other” method of communication:



During business hours, all telephone calls to WNP are live-answered by a Customer Service Representative. The LDC’s office has a back-up generator that means that telephone equipment and customer-service systems are not affected during an outage. Outside of business hours, telephone calls are managed by third-party after-hours service provider, who will forward emergency messages to the On-Call line-men during a power outage.

WNP updates its website with power outage information (such as areas affected, current status and restoration times if known.) The LDC also posts the same information on social media sites (Facebook and Twitter).

For consideration:

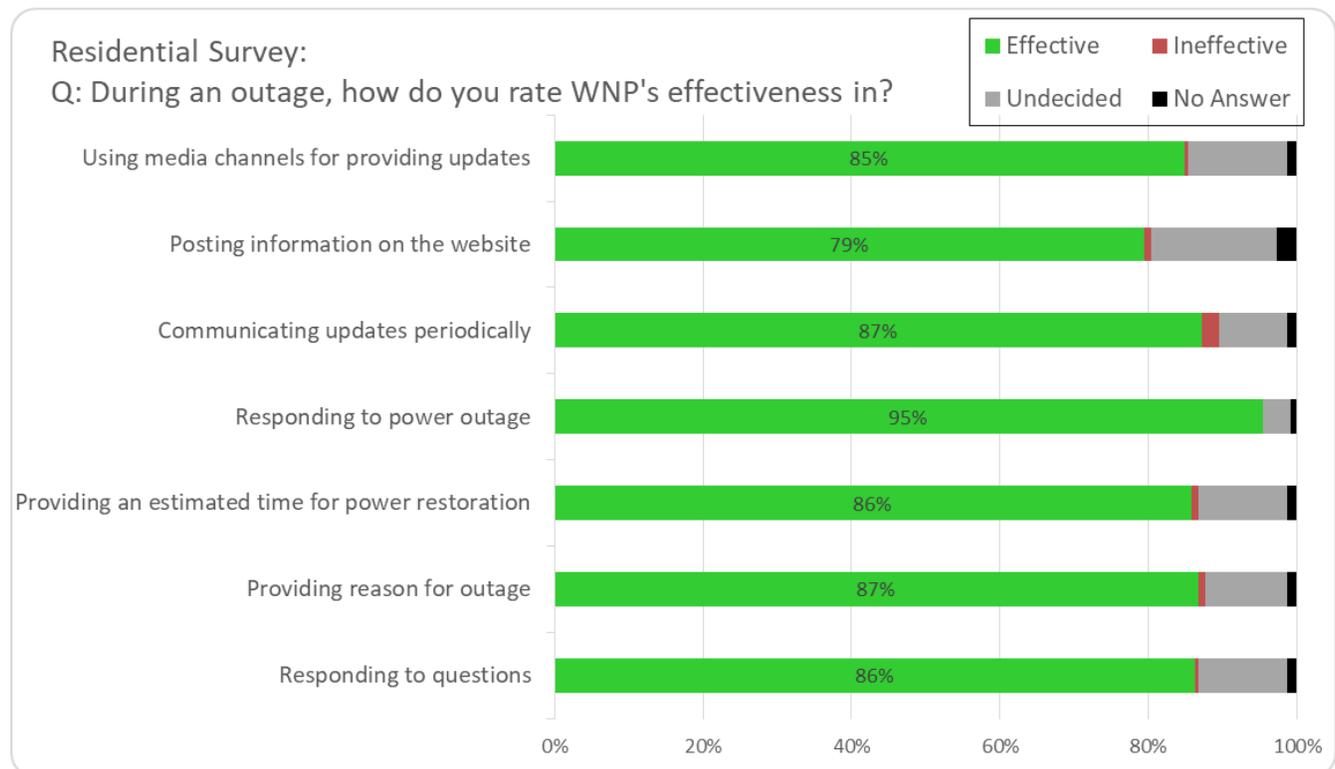
It would be interesting to know what the “Other” communication method is that 67 respondents have used; maybe, in future surveys, this question needs to include “open-text” for customers to name their communication method or preference.

4. Effectiveness during an Outage

This question asked, during an outage, how effective WNP was not only in responding to the outage but also providing information to customers. Against a seven of statements, customers could select “Effective”, “Ineffective” or “Undecided”.

Findings:

- 95% of respondents agreed that WNP is effective in responding to power outages
- The lowest score related to 79% of respondents rating WNP as effective in posting information on its website.
- The remaining statements all scored favourable with 85%+ of respondents rating WNP being effective in these areas.



For consideration:

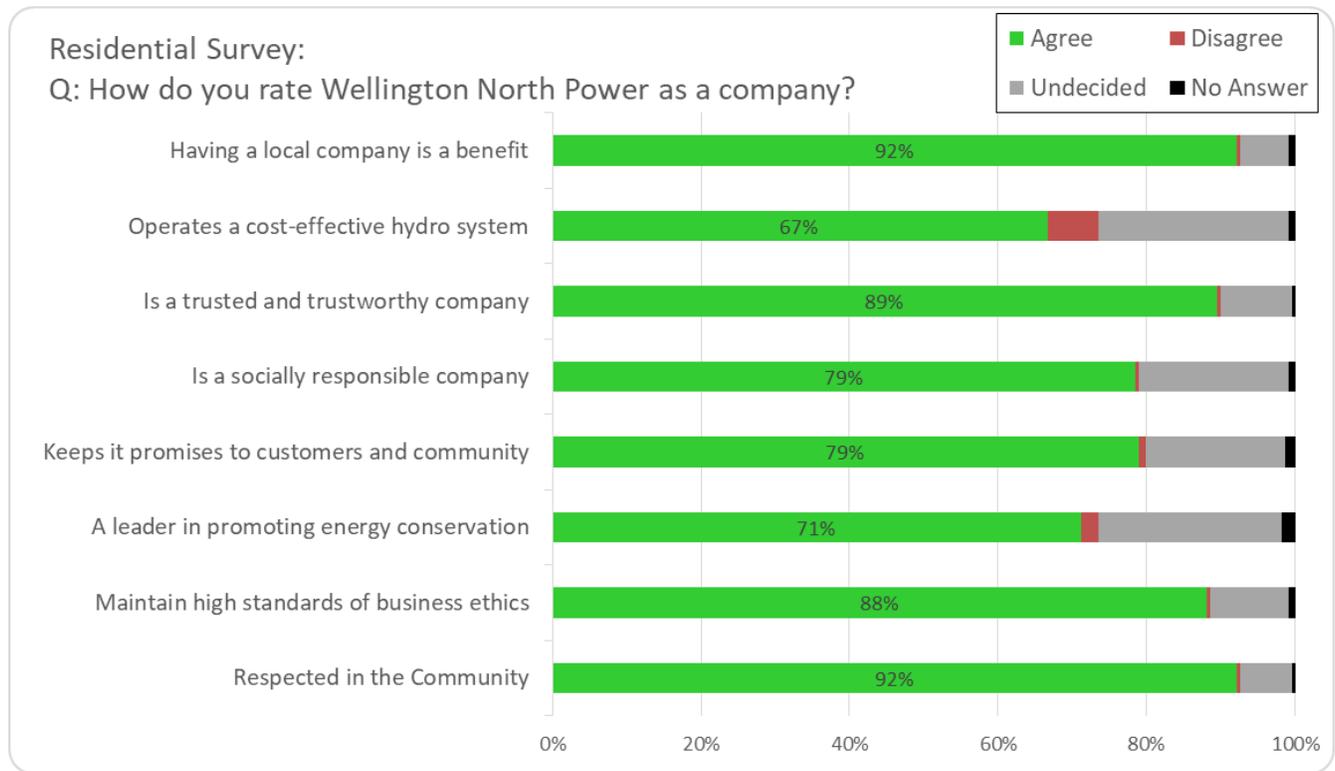
During an outage, WNP posts the same information on its social media pages as it does on its website. WNP website also shows the social media thread conversation. Consequently, LDC is bemused why respondents rated website posting effectiveness lower than social media posting effectiveness – the only rationale is customers go to social media first before checking the WNP's website.

As at January 24th 2020, the LDC had:

- 655 followers on Facebook (approx. 20% of WNP's residential customers).
- 470 followers on Twitter (approx. 14% of WNP's residential customers).

5. Company Profile

This question considered how customers felt about WNP. Customers were provided with a series of statements enabling respondents to choose either “Agree”, “Disagree” or “Undecided” with each statement. The chart below shows the collated responses:



Findings:

Statement	Agree	Disagree	Undecided	No Answer
Respected in the Community	92.2%	0.5%	6.8%	0.5%
Maintain high standards of business ethics	88.1%	0.5%	10.5%	0.9%
A leader in promoting energy conservation	71.2%	2.3%	24.7%	1.8%
Keeps it promises to customers and community	79.0%	0.9%	18.7%	1.4%
Is a socially responsible company	78.5%	0.5%	20.1%	0.9%
Is a trusted and trustworthy company	89.5%	0.5%	9.6%	0.5%
Operates a cost-effective hydro system	66.7%	6.8%	25.6%	0.9%
Having a local company is a benefit	92.2%	0.5%	6.4%	0.9%

- 90% of the survey population (196 respondents of 219) agreed that WNP is a trusted company.
- 92% of the survey population (202 respondents) agreed that WNP is respected in the community and 88% (193 respondents) agreed the LDC has high standards of business ethics.
- 67% of the survey population (146 respondents) agreed WNP operates a cost-effective hydro system. For this statement, 26% of respondents (56 people) were “undecided” about this statement and 7% (15 people) “disagreed” with this statement.
- As a leader in promoting energy conservation, 71% (156 people) agreed with this statement; however 25% (54 people) were undecided about this statement. In March 2019 the government announced that energy conservation was to be centrally-delivered by the IESO, rather than by LDCs. Although WNP supports energy conservation, from March 2019, the LDC has reduced its’ efforts in promoting energy conservation (i.e. less social-media posting about energy savings programs and no hosting of CDM stands at local community events).

For consideration:

WNP is respected in the communities in which it operates and needs to work towards maintaining the trust of its customers and stakeholders. The LDC office is open 5-days a week during business for customers to openly visit and talk to knowledgeable customer service staff as well as managers and the CEO/President.

From the survey results, the LDC needs to consider:

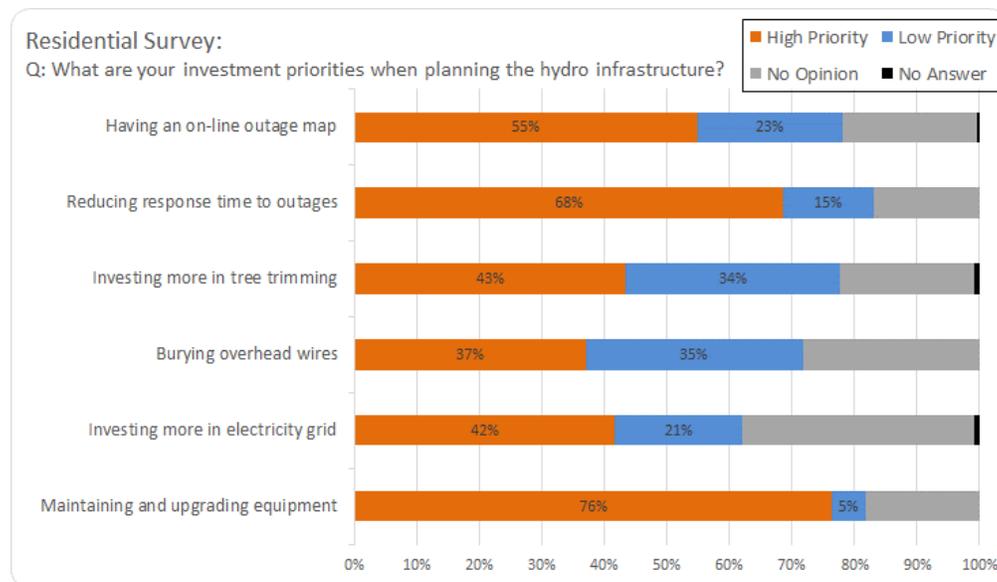
- What messages it communicates to its customers.
- How it communicates with customers.
- The demographics of the service territories.

WNP has a social media presence but this media may not appeal to the majority of the LDC's customers. The LDC could consider:

- a) An article in the local newspaper each quarter about capital projects completed and future plans which could make reference to being social-responsible (i.e. safe disposal of oil-filled transformers).
- b) A yearly open-house community meeting to present proposed operating budgets and capital investment plans. This may help inform our customers about what options were explored, why investment is needed and how the LDC is being cost-effective for stakeholders' needs today and for the future.

6. Investment Priorities

This question sought customers' opinions about how WNP should invest. Customers were provided with a series of statements enabling respondents to choose either "High Priority", "Low Priority" or "No Opinion" with each statement. The chart below shows the collated responses:



Findings:

Statement	High Priority	Low Priority	No Opinion	No Answer
Maintaining and upgrading equipment	76.3%	5.5%	18.3%	0.0%
Investing more in electricity grid	41.6%	20.5%	37.0%	0.9%
Burying overhead wires	37.0%	34.7%	28.3%	0.0%
Investing more in tree trimming	43.4%	34.2%	21.5%	0.9%
Reducing response time to outages	68.5%	14.6%	16.9%	0.0%
Having an on-line outage map	54.8%	23.3%	21.5%	0.5%

- "Maintaining and upgrading equipment" was the most popular "high priority" of all the statements provided. 76% of the survey population (167 respondents out of 219) rated this as a high priority whereas 5% (12 people) rates it as "low priority". (18% or 40 people had no opinion about this item).
- "Burying overhead wires" was the lowest "high priority" as rated by 37% of the respondents (81 people). A near equal number of respondents (35% or 76 people) rates this item as a "low priority".
- Of all the statements, "Investing more in electricity grid", achieved the highest "no opinion" result (37% of respondents or 81 people).

For consideration:

Regarding the statement "Investing more in electricity grid", perhaps the reason this was rated as "No Opinion" by over one-third by all respondents is because of the ambiguity of the statement. This statement was intended to gain feedback about grid-modernization and new technology; however in reflection the statement was poorly worded hence the high "no opinion" result. The LDC could consider including articles about grid-modernization and new technology in future newspaper articles to inform our customers.

Respondents rated "maintaining and upgrading equipment" as the highest priority of all the statements. WNP needs to continue with its capital investment that maintains the reliability of the distribution system at a pace that does not excessively increase hydro-rates year-over year. This planning is through good asset condition assessment programs that will assist in making informed asset replacement priority decisions.

7. Price and Reliability

This question asked customers to rate five statements from 1 being most important to them to 5 being of least important. The statements were:

- a) Pay lower electricity rates with reduced reliability.
- b) Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability.
- c) Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization.
- d) Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables.
- e) Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates.

Findings:

The table below shows the results as a percentage of all responses received:

Statement	Most Important  Least Important					No Answer	Total
	1	2	3	4	5		
Pay lower electricity rates with reduced reliability	18.7%	18.7%	29.7%	9.1%	22.8%	0.9%	100%
Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability	8.2%	16.0%	37.9%	10.5%	26.0%	1.4%	100%
Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization	12.8%	18.3%	42.9%	14.2%	11.0%	0.9%	100%
Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables	8.7%	11.4%	21.9%	20.1%	37.0%	0.9%	100%
Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates	46.1%	20.5%	22.4%	5.5%	4.6%	0.9%	100%

The table below shows the results by the number of survey respondents:

Statement	Most Important  Least Important					No Answer	Total
	1	2	3	4	5		
Pay lower electricity rates with reduced reliability	41	41	65	20	50	2	219
Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability	18	35	83	23	57	3	219
Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization	28	40	94	31	24	2	219
Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables	19	25	48	44	81	2	219
Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates	101	45	49	12	10	2	219

- “Continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates” statement was ranked as the highest “most important” score of all statements (rates as high important by 46% of respondents or 101 people out of 219).
- “Increase spending to accommodate grid modernization” was the highest neutral statement with 43% of respondents (or 94 people) scoring this a “3” (i.e. neither important nor not important).
- “Pay higher electricity rates to pay for burying cables” was rated as the “least important” statement with 37% of respondents (or 81 people) scoring this with a “5”.
- Slightly more people rated paying “lower electricity rates with reduced reliability” as a least important priority compared to those that scored it as a most important (i.e. 50 people compared to 41 people).
- Over three-times the number of people rated paying “Pay higher electricity rates with increased reliability” as “least important” compared to those that rated this statement as “most important” (i.e. 57 people compared to 18 people).

For consideration:

In preparing its capital plans and setting operating budgets, based upon the survey result, WNP should continue with current investment spending levels to balance electricity reliability and rates.

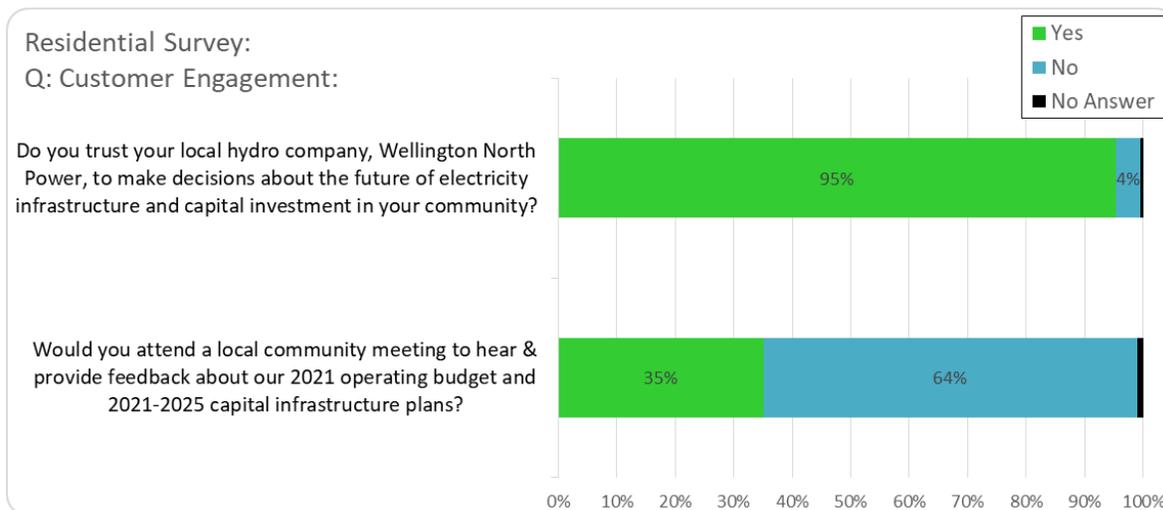
8. Trust

This question asked if WNP's customers:

- a) Trusted their local hydro company to make decisions about electricity infrastructure and capital investments.
- b) Interested in attending a community open house to provide feedback concerning WNP's 2021 operating budget and 5-year capital investment plan for 2021-2025.

Findings:

- 95% of respondents (209 of 219 responses) did trust their local hydro company, WNP, to make decisions concerning the electricity infrastructure.
- 35% of respondents (77 of 219 responses) would be interested in attending a community meeting.



For consideration:

WNP appreciates and acknowledges the trust bestowed on the LDC by its customers. Wellington North Power Inc. has been serving the community for over 100 years and is committed to continuing to provide outstanding service to its customers and stakeholders.

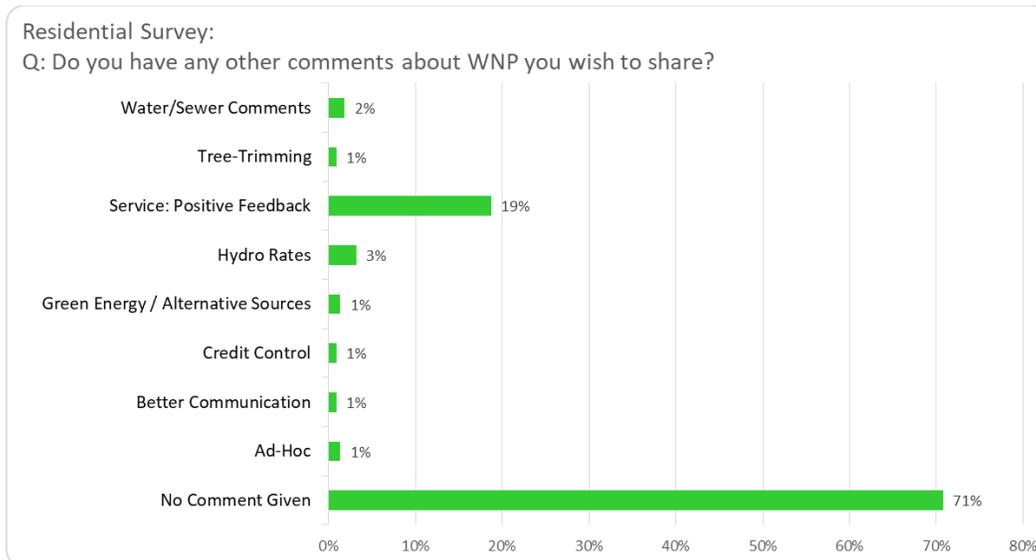
Given the response from the residential customers who participated in the survey, WNP should consider hosting a community meeting to enable customers to hear about and be involved in WNP's 2021 operating budget and capital investment plans.

9. Other Comments Received

Customers were given the opportunity to provide comments about Wellington North Power. This was free-text so customers could write anything.

Findings:

64 customers (29% of survey respondents) provided comments with their completed surveys. WNP reviewed each comment and grouped it as per table below:



Comment Regarding	# of Responses	%
No Comment Given	155	71%
Ad-Hoc	3	1%
Better Communication	2	1%
Credit Control	2	1%
Green Energy / Alternative Sources	3	1%
Hydro Rates	7	3%
Service: Positive Feedback	41	19%
Tree-Trimming	2	1%
Water/Sewer Comments	4	2%
Total	219	100%

Of those respondents that did provide comments:

- 41 people took the time to provide positive comments about the service they receive from WNP. This included comments about knowledgeable and friendly customer service staff, good response times for power outages and great job at keeping the lights on.
- 7 people provided comments about hydro rates that ranged from keep the rates the same, service fees are too high and why do I pay a service fee for each apartment in a building I own.
- There were 3 ad-hoc comments (ask the meter reader to keep of the lawn; keep local; and customer service hours should be extended).
- There were 3 comments concerning green energy / energy alternatives including building a generator at the dam on a nearby river.

For consideration:

WNP will share the survey results, including customer comments, with employees and directors. This information will assist the LDC with its planning and budget processes as well as determining customers' needs and preferences for today and the future.