

PUC

**PUBLIC UTILITIES
COMMISSION**



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2023**



The PUC aims to ensure that the regulated utilities offer efficient services to consumers at a reasonable cost without compromising their financial and operational integrity.

This report contains the thirty-third Annual Report of the Public Utilities Commission Guyana.

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Introduction

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) serves as the independent regulatory authority with oversight for the Water, Electricity and Telecommunications sectors in Guyana. The Commission was established by the Public Utilities Commission Act No. 26 of 1990 and now operates under the Public Utilities Commission Act No. 19 of 2016.

In accordance with its mandate, the Commission is tasked with ensuring that the regulated service providers in Guyana adhere to the standards outlined in the relevant Acts and Regulations. A pivotal aspect of our responsibilities involves the monitoring of quality of service and ensuring that prices for regulated services are fair and reasonable. At all times, the Commission is required to strike a balance which preserves the financial viability of the operator and the affordability for consumers.

Section 5(1) of the PUC Act 2016 provides for the appointment of a Chairman and four (4) Commissioners. The present composition of the Commission is:

- Ms. Dela Britton, Chairman
- Mr. Rajendra Bisessar, Commissioner
- Ms. Verlyn Klass, Commissioner
- Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul, Commissioner
- Mr. Maurice Solomon, Commissioner

The staff of the Commission is derived from five (5) Divisions: Secretariat, Finance, Engineering, Accounts and Complaints.

The Commission exercises statutory oversight over the following public utilities and telecommunications undertakings:

- Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Co. Ltd. (GTT)
- Guyana Power & Light Inc. (GPL)
- Guyana Water Inc. (GWI)
- U-Mobile (Cellular) Inc. (Digicel)
- E-Networks Inc. (ENet)
- Green Gibraltar Inc.
- Quark Communications Inc.

Headquartered in Georgetown, the Commission as part of its commitment to decentralize its operations and to be accessible to consumers established offices in Berbice and Linden. Our operations in Essequibo branch was brought to a halt due to a significant decrease in traffic. This decision reflects a pragmatic response to the shifting patterns of consumer engagement in that particular region.

Mission

To ensure that regulated utilities offer efficient service to consumers at a reasonable cost without compromising their financial and operational integrity.

Vision

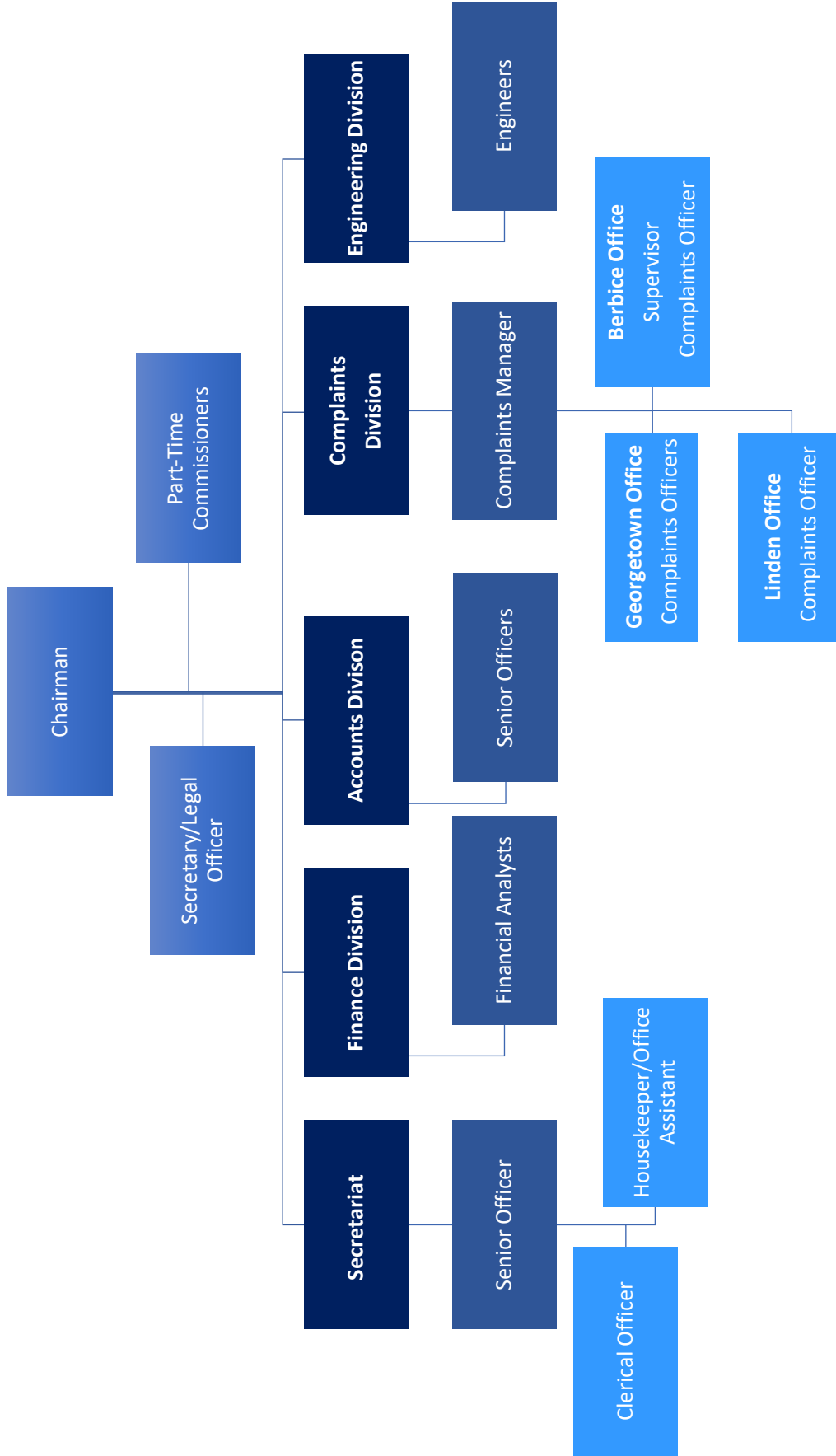
To create an environment in which there is universal access to service in the public sector, as well as high quality of service which is cost effective and beneficial to all stakeholders.

Editorial Board

Mrs. Anuradha Mohabir-Singh - Senior Officer - Secretariat
Ms. Jamelia Bancroft - Complaints Officer



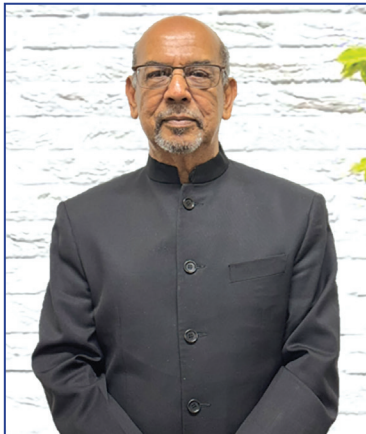
ORGANISATION CHART 2023



Chairperson and Commissioners 2023



Ms. Dela A Britton
Chairperson



Mr. Rajendra Bisessar
Commissioner



Ms. Verlyn Klass
Commissioner



Dr. Nanda K. Gopaul
Commissioner



Mr. Maurice Solomon
Commissioner

Capacity Building

No organization is complete without efficient manpower and the Public Utilities Commission places significant emphasis on capacity building in order to enhance its operations and services. In the reporting year 2023, the staff of the Commission were engaged in diverse internal and external training sessions which included regulatory frameworks, customer services and technical skills relevant to the mandate of the Commission.

External training included the Number Portability Clearinghouse Administrative and Technical training with Porting XS which provided insight into the administrative and technical aspects of the Clearinghouse provider and procurement training with the Small Business Bureau and the Public Procurement Commission. The Commission participated in the CAREC Resilient Energy Regulation Workshop Series which was done virtually.

The year also saw active involvement in conferences - CARILEC's Engineering and Procurement Conference in Trinidad and Tobago where the challenges of managing Variable Renewable Energy (VRE) were explored, and the Caribbean Energies and Investment Summit in Barbados where the PUC Chairperson had served as a panelist for the roundtable discussion on *The Experience of OOCUR Members with Independent Regulation*.

The Commission enhanced its internal capacity building initiatives by conducting workshops into GPL's Rate Formulation Process, Electrical Safety, Telecommunications Providers Rate Notification Process and Human Resources Management.

From the desk of The Chairperson



Ms. Dela A Britton - Chairperson

In 2023, the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) Guyana took pride that it has treated every complaint, every application and every consultative process with the robust oversight, scrutiny, detailed investigations and deliberations whenever applicable with the richness each process deserved.

As we enter into the third year of the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector, we have noted that this vehicle of change has provided impetus for the increase in fixed internet subscribers. The spike was perhaps as a direct result of the availability of fixed internet services offered by GTT Inc., E-Networks Inc. and U-Mobile (Cellular) Inc. (Digicel). Additionally, there was significant growth in mobile services with a mobile penetration rate of approximately 96% when compared to 87% at the start of liberalisation in 2020 in Guyana. The advent of advanced mobile technologies including 4th Generation (LTE) and 5th Generation on mobile devices are equally significant strides in the Guyanese telecommunications landscape.

The Number Portability Working Group (NPWG) which was established on August 5, 2021 and chaired by a member of the Commission comprises of representatives from the telecommunications service providers and the Telecommunications Agency, has continued in its pursuit towards the delivery of an efficient number portability in Guyana. As at

December 31, 2023 as part of the ongoing process, the telecommunications undertakings are in the process of concluding the 'live' testing phase. We at the Commission have experienced firsthand the prototype testing and we continue to collaborate with the Telecommunications Agency and the Operators to ensure that the process towards number portability is seamless. It is anticipated that the launch of number portability is slated for 2024.

The Commission in accordance with its commitment to the promotion of fair competition and the removal of barriers to competition had implemented the Fixed and Mobile Termination Directive in 2022. This Directive mandated a reduction in termination rates which are charges for interconnection calls between service providers. The rates which had been in effect since 2010, were lowered with effect from February 17, 2023 from \$14 to a fixed termination rate of \$8.71 and a mobile termination rate of \$11.42. In 2023, the Commission approved the Interconnection and Access Agreements between GTT, Digicel and E-Networks through Orders Nos. 2, 3 and 4 of 2023. These Orders established fixed termination rates of \$8.71 and mobile termination rates of \$11.42.

In keeping with the provisions of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection) Regulations, the Commission in 2023 had expanded the berth of its monitoring of the operators. Regulatory compliance by the operators seeks to foster an environment where service providers are compelled to meet the highest standards of service and accountability. This in turn creates a robust competitive landscape as it will urge each service provider to provide better Quality of Service and offers to consumers.

In 2023, the Commission saw a decrease of 31% in complaints received when compared to the previous year

(2022) which stood at 30%. This decline may be attributed to the increased competition within the sector which appears to have spurred service providers to provide better quality of services. It is also evident to the Commission that the service providers have improved their internal mechanism for speedy resolution of consumer complaints.

In the electricity sector, in accordance with the Guyana Power & Light Inc. (GPL) License granted on October 4, 2010 the Commission satisfied its usual statutory obligations by initiating its annual review of the Operating Standards and Performance Targets (OSPT) of GPL. On April 26, 2023 the Commission issued Order No. 1 of 2023. Whilst the Commission had determined that the company did not meet most of its standards and targets, the Commission recognized that several targets were near to the matrices of the targeted achievements. Additionally, the company reported a reduction in its system losses from a position of 31.60% at the commencement of the OSPT in the year 2011 to 24.92% in the year 2022. The Commission in its decision sought to acknowledge the company's efforts to provide reliable, cost-effective and high-quality energy services.

In September 2023, GPL experienced a shortfall in generation in the Demerara-Berbice Interconnection System (DBIS) which triggered the introduction of a Time of Use Tariff for Tariff D consumers, applying different rates during periods of peak demand. Time of Use refers to an interim measure and not a permanent tariff. Tariff D consumers are what GPL considers the large consumption customers. The Time of Use tariff was approved for implementation by the PUC effective October 1, 2023 to January 31, 2024. The generation shortfall was a consequence of the ongoing economic expansion in the country leading to heightened electricity consumption. Like most of the world, Guyana at that time was plagued with an unprecedented heat wave which led to heightened consumption. In the reporting year, GPL had experienced a surge in the demand for electricity which resulted in a generation deficit. Why the Surge? During the period 2019-2020, the average cost for a barrel of fuel was at an average of 44US dollars per barrel and commercial consumers chose to self-generate which cost less than if connected to GPL's grid. The years 2021 to 2022 saw the cost for a barrel of fuel increase to 79US dollars per barrel which led many of the commercial consumers to determine that it was beneficial to return to the national grid thus spiraling the increased demand. The increase in residential home ownership and burgeoning housing schemes also resulted in this increased demand for power.

After a forensic examination of the compensation complaints received in 2023, the PUC had approached GPL to revise its present Standard Operating Procedures related to compensation for damage caused to consumer appliances as a consequence of voltage fluctuation and electricity interruption. At the time of this publication, GPL is still scrutinizing PUC's proposal and it is hoped that same could be implemented in 2024.

For approximately fifteen (15) years the Guyana Power and Light (GPL) had utilized an energy consumption index for the purpose of back-billing consumers accused of electricity theft. The values used by GPL were considered outdated. The Commission took the initiative to create a joint GPL-PUC task force utilizing data and information from the member countries under the Caribbean Electric Utility Services Corporation (CARILEC) to examine Consumption Index Values for appliances used in Guyana. On July 1, 2023 the Commission and GPL implemented a new kilowatt-hour (kWh) consumption index values for appliances to be used in Guyana which will aid to retroactively bill consumers. This information can be found on PUC's website at www.puc.org.gy and GPL's website at <https://gplinc.com/bill/energy-needs>.

In 2023, the Commission continued its focus on the water sector in order to ensure that there is adequate availability of safe and reliable water resources for all citizens of Guyana whilst monitoring sustainable water management practices.

On October 5, 2023 the Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) requested a review and modification of the Commission's Order No. 2 of 2022, in the matter of a Review of Residential Reconnection Non-Voluntary Fees approved under Order 2 of 2018 for the Guyana Water Inc. GWI posited that the mandated increase in customer credit limits by the Commission conflicted with the Water & Sewerage Act No. 5 of 2002. Order No. 2 of 2022 had required the company to raise the credit limit from \$10,000 to \$12,500 effective January 1, 2023 to extend the grace period for payments. Following internal deliberations and taking into account the arguments of both the Guyana Water Inc. and the Guyana Consumers Association, the Commission issued Order 5 of 2023 which

reinstated the original credit limit of \$10,000, with immediate effect.

The Commission recognized GWI's ongoing efforts to effectively meter consumers who were previously un-metered. The installation of 10,386 meters in 2023 signifies that the company has now metered approximately 80% of its consumers base. This is a commendable effort by GWI which is expected to significantly contribute to a reduction in non-revenue water. It is generally assumed that metered consumers who are billed based on their actual water usage tend to use water more responsibly leading to a decrease in water wastage. As a result, this decrease in non-revenue water is anticipated to lower the company's production costs and in turn will enhance GWI's overall revenue.

As it relates to our complaints, we are pleased to report that in 2023 87.5% of our complaints received were resolved. This resolution represents 224 of the 256 complaints received by the Commission. The Commission's intervention and advocacy in these matters resulted in the amount of \$47,913,418 in compensation for Guyanese consumers.

In 2023, the Commission continued its public awareness campaign utilizing both print and digital media.

The Commission resumed its webinar series in observance of World Consumer Rights day. An official of the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission Guyana (CCAC), who served as a panellist on this webinar reiterated its commitment to collaborating with the PUC in the interest of consumers. In the past, the Competition and Consumer Affairs Commission had a desk at PUC's Berbice office. *The Telecoms Sector in Guyana – Navigating this New Frontier* webinar provided the Commission with the unique platform to introduce the concept of Number Portability in Guyana. As we continue to tweak our conversations, we are heartened that our webinar series attracted over 300 participants on Zoom whilst over 6,500 persons were reached via our Facebook page. In June 2023, PUC Chairperson was guest on the ICT Pulse podcast– *Accelerating the Development of Guyana's Telecoms Sector* where there was an interesting discourse on the state of Guyana's Telecoms sector, its evolution for the Commission and the country as a whole. The challenges experienced with bridging the digital divide and the positive impact of the impending launch of number portability in the country provide fodder for successive webinars.

The stellar work of the Commission would be impossible without the dedication and zeal of our committed Commissioners and Staff of the Commission. For 2024 and beyond, PUC is focused on expanding its capacity building and knowledge exchange with our sister regulators throughout the Caribbean. The Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to regulate and monitor the utilities under our purview and to ensure the delivery of efficient services for all Guyana.





Engineering Division

Mr. Nikita Somwaru – Engineer

The Engineering Division plays a fundamental role within the Commission's operations providing technical oversight across the sectors under its purview. One of its primary functions involves monitoring regulatory trends, offering recommendations to the Commission and collaborating with the Complaints Division to resolve technical issues.

The Division is responsible for the review of the development and expansion programs of all service providers under the Commission's purview with emphasis on the reporting obligations regarding technical submissions. Additionally, the Engineering Division spearheads the monitoring and reporting aspect of the operators' quality of service standards.

Electricity Sector



Operating Standards & Performance Targets (OSPT)

The Commission is required to conduct an annual assessment which includes a public hearing before March 30th of the subsequent year, to assess Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) performance and achievements during the year.

The Engineering Division reviewed the Operating Standards and Performance Targets (OSPT) for the year 2023 on the following:

- Customer Interruptions (SAIFI and SAIDI)
- Voltage Regulation
- Losses
- Average Availability

At the time of the compilation of this report, the Commission had obtained OSPT achievement reports from GPL for the year 2023. The targets listed below were derived from GPL's Development and Expansion Plan spanning from 2023 to 2027.

	OSPT	2023 Targets			2023 Achievements				
		Units	Annual	Qtr.	1 st Qtr.	2 nd Qtr.	3 rd Qtr.	4 th Qtr.	Total
1	Customer Interruptions								
	SAIFI	No.	90	22.5	17.30	20.8	20.9	32.3	91.3
	SAIDI	Hrs.	95	23.75	15.20	19.4	24	41	99.6
2	Voltage Regulation								
	% of Nominal Voltage (stable)	%							
	% Variance after System Disturbance	%							
3	Losses	%	24.1	24.10	24.41	24.38	24.55	24.50	24.46
	Technical	%	11.1	11.10	11.45	11.40	11.35	11.30	11.37
	Non-Technical	%	13	13	12.96	12.98	13.2	13.22	13.09
4	Average Availability	%	85	85	85.1	87.1	87.9	88.7	87.2

Table showing GPL's 2023 OSPT achievements

Customer Interruptions

The indices used for monitoring customer interruptions are the System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI) and System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI).

System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI)

$$\text{SAIFI} = (\text{Total Number of Customer Interruptions}) / (\text{Total Customers Served})$$

GPL's target projection for 2023 is set at 90 which indicates that the cumulative number of outages experienced by a consumer throughout the year should not surpass 90. As of the end of the fourth quarter of 2023 the average number of outages per customer stood at 91.3, indicating that the target was not successfully achieved.

System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI)

This index serves as a commonly used reliability indicator for power companies to determine the duration of an outage experienced by consumers. For instance, consider a feeder supplying a city with fifteen thousand (15,000) customers experiencing six (6) outages in a month, each lasting two (2) hours. If these outages affect five thousand (5,000), eight thousand (8,000), and ten thousand (10,000) customers respectively the index is calculated as $[(2 \times 5000) + (2 \times 8000) + (2 \times 10000)] / 15000 = 3.07$ hours per customer.

$$\text{SAIDI} = (\text{Total Customer Hours of Interruptions}) / (\text{Total Customers Served})$$

The SAIDI target set for 2023 is 95 hours of power interruptions, equating to an average of 23.5 hours per quarter. By the conclusion of the fourth quarter the average duration of outages was 99.6 hours. The target at the end of the fourth quarter has not been successfully attained.

Voltage Regulation

In accordance with GPL’s OSPT requirements, the company is obligated to maintain a voltage within $\pm 5\%$ of the nominal value under stable conditions and within $\pm 10\%$ of the nominal value following system disturbances. Since the introduction of the OSPT in 2011, GPL has consistently stated that they will use consumer complaints as a basis for evaluating their compliance with this standard.

End of 2023	1st Qtr.	2nd Qtr.	3rd Qtr.	4th Qtr.	Total
Complaints Responded to in 30 days	550	236	244	177	1207
Complaints Completed in 25 days	524	233	244	177	1178

Table showing Voltage Complaints

The table shows that by the end of the fourth quarter the company had received a total of 1207 complaints of which 1178 of these were successfully resolved within a 30-day period. During GPL’s OSPT review in 2020 the company had informed the Commission that it intends to implement the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) platform. This infrastructure when integrated with the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) software will enable the accurate determination of individual consumers’ voltage levels. This in turn will empower the company to promptly identify and rectify any anomalies with voltage levels within its network. The Commission is disappointed that the company has not employed the services of the SCADA software to determine the average voltage received by consumers.

System Losses

The projected losses for 2023 stand at 24.1% indicating a 0.9% reduction from the 2022 target of 25%. By the end of the fourth quarter in 2023 the average losses were 24.46% (11.37% technical and 13.09% non-technical). This achievement suggests that the company fell short of its 24.1% target by 0.36%. However, compared to the achievement in the year 2022 where losses were 25.86%, there is a positive improvement in 2023 with system losses reduced by 1.4%.

Average Availability

GPL has set the target of 85% average availability for 2023 for its generating capacity. The Commission is pleased to report that at the end of the fourth quarter the company had exceeded its target where the average availability was 87.2%.

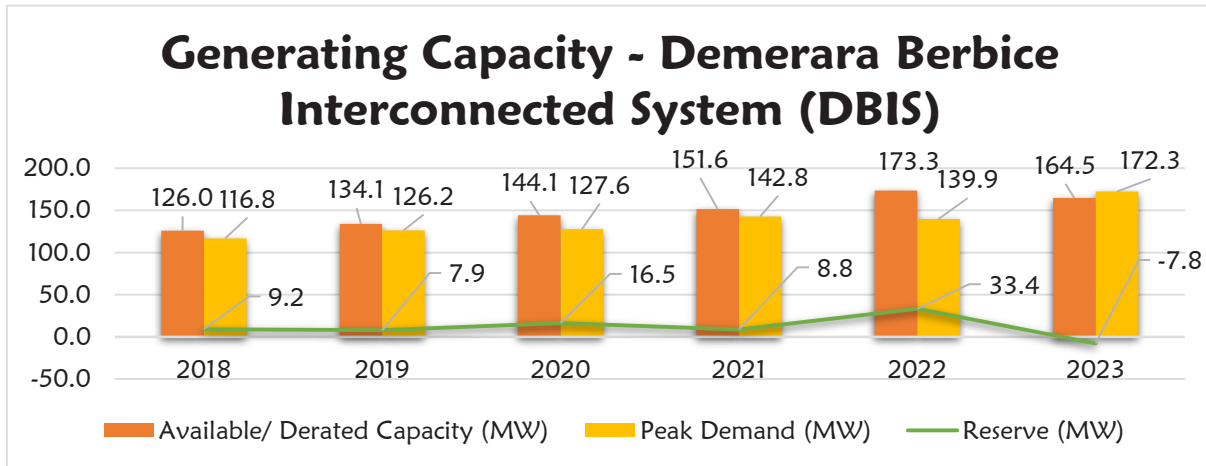
Developments in the Electricity Sector

Consumption Index

For approximately fifteen (15) years, GPL has employed an energy consumption index for back-billing consumers accused of electricity theft. However, the values utilized by GPL were deemed outdated due to the introduction of new appliances on the world market, most of which are energy-efficient and would require new measurements. GPL together with the Commission formed a task force comprising the PUC’s Engineer, Complaints Manager, GPL’s Billing Manager and Engineers to assess the consumption patterns of the new appliances used by consumers. The Commission as part of its mandate undertook the responsibility of compiling appropriate kilowatt-hour (kWh) consumption values for appliances used in Guyana and Caribbean countries. The Commission found that data and information from member countries under the Caribbean Electric Utility

Services Corporation (CARILEC) were beneficial during the consumption index review process. The Commission reviewed the values for those appliances and shared its findings with GPL. After reviewing the Commission’s findings, GPL conducted their in-house calculations, and the suggested changes were further reviewed by the task force. A finalized list was created, and the Commission and GPL agreed to the new kWh values for the appliances. A decision was made for GPL to commence the use of the new values from the updated Consumption Index starting July 1, 2023. This new consumption index can be found via the link below from the PUC website: https://www.puc.org.gy/pucdocs/Press_Releases/2023/GPL%20Consumption%20Index%2021%20JUN%202023.pdf

Generating Capacity on the DBIS



Graph showing Generating capacity, Peak demand and Reserve.

For the months of September to December 2023, GPL experienced a shortfall in generation capacity on the Demerara Berbice Interconnected System (DBIS) which is interconnected to the following generating plants located at: Garden of Eden, Vreed - en - Hoop, Kingston, Canefield, Onverwagt, Skeldon, and GPL’s Solar PV.

The bar graph above illustrates the trends in GPL’s generating capacity, peak demands and reserve generation from 2018 to 2023. In 2018 the company’s generating capacity stood at 126MW with a peak demand of 116.8MW and a reserve of 9.2MW.

From 2019 to 2020 the generating capacity increased by 10MW while the demand remained between 126 and 127 MW. Notably, in 2022 the generating capacity increased to 173.3MW due to the addition of five (5) 9.3MW generating plants. The fluctuations in generating capacity over the years are influenced by the periodic maintenance related to the offline status of various generating plants at the above-mentioned locations.

Between 2022 and 2023 the demand surged from 139.9MW to 172.3MW. This increase was due to commercial consumers returning to the grid and the increase in new homes in developed housing schemes, raising concerns about GPL’s generating capacity. This demand led to the introduction of load shedding in the fourth quarter of 2023, which is the deliberate and temporary reduction of electricity supply to certain areas or customers in order to prevent a wider-scale power outage by the company due to insufficient generating capacity.

Plans to Increase Generating Capacity

In an effort to combat the generation shortfall GPL acquired 17 reconditioned containerized generator sets, each boasting a capacity of 1.7 MW sourced from the Dominican Republic. This strategic procurement is poised to generate a cumulative power output of 28.9 Megawatts (MW). The company in keeping with its stipulated timeframe of December 15, 2023 installed a total of 8.5 MW at its Columbia, Mahaica-Berbice generating site. The existing installed generating capacity on the DBIS stands at 200.137 MW. The incorporation of the remaining 12 reconditioned containerized generator sets will contribute an additional 20.4MW. Consequently, the new

total capacity is projected to reach 220.537 MW. This augmented capacity is envisioned to provide GPL with a heightened level of reliability, potentially obviating the need for load shedding. This development signals a significant enhancement in GPL's power generation capabilities, positioning the company in a more secure and comfortable stance in meeting the growing electricity demand.

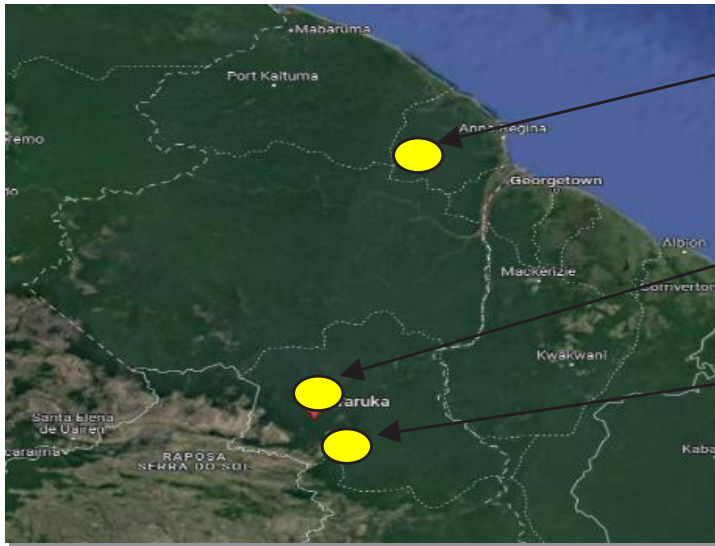
Water Sector



The Engineering Division reviewed the Strategic Plan of the Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) for the period 2021 to 2025 regarding its annual development objectives. Several projects highlighted in the print media as completed or commissioned in 2023 were not included in the company's Strategic Plan but were carried out by GWI in partnership with the Ministry of Housing and Water.

New Well Commissioned

Kwebanna, an Amerindian village located in Guyana's Barima-Waini region is now linked by road to Kumaka serving its population of about 650 residents who historically relied on nearby creeks for water. A collaborative effort involving GWI, Kwebanna District Council and residents resulted in a \$20 million well construction providing water to serve 95% of the village. In Tasserene, a Mazaruni settlement, 400 residents now benefit from a \$53.9 million water distribution network providing 24-hour clean water as part of regional modernization efforts. Meanwhile, Taruka another village in Region Eight (8) received a \$26.5 million water distribution network featuring a new well, 2000 meters of pipes and 40 service connections enhancing water accessibility to the residents.



Kwebana Village

Taruka Village

Tasserene Village

Image of map showing the villages of Kwebanna, Tasserene and Taruka

Metering

In 2018, as a result of financial losses GWI had approached the Commission for a rate adjustment leading to the approval of phased rate increases by the Commission in Order 2 of 2018 which also included the incremental installation of meters for unmetered consumers to reduce non-revenue water.

In keeping with the requirements of Order 2 of 2018, by the end of the year 2022, GWI would have installed 20,025 meters. This exercise continued in 2023 and by the end of the reporting year an additional 24,408 meters were installed. This increase in meter installation is expected to lower water production levels as metered consumers adopt conservative usage practices while also improving the company’s financial stability by ensuring that consumers are billed for their actual water consumption at any given time.

Water Quality

The water quality reports submitted by GWI at the end of the reporting year indicated that 13 of their 28 treatment facilities are not in compliance with the World Health Organization (WHO) standards. The data on water quality supplied by GWI has been organized for tracking and monitoring the trends of improved water quality towards the WHO standards. This monitoring enables the Commission to discern areas where the water supplied to consumers falls short of the mandated quality standards, as well as areas where improvements or deterioration have occurred. The Commission anticipates that by the end of the year 2024 the company will ensure that the water provided to consumers achieves WHO standards.

WHO Values	pH	Turbidity (NTU)	Iron (mg/l)	Al (mg/l)	Colour (TCU)	Chlorine (mg/l)
	6.5 – 8.0	≤5.0	<3.0	≤0.2	<15	<5.0

Table showing World Health Organisation standards for water.

Telecommunications Sector



Number Portability

Throughout the 2023 reporting period significant milestones were achieved in the implementation of Number Portability. The clearinghouse administrator, Porting XS which is based in the Netherlands finalized agreements with three service providers: GTT Inc., U-Mobile (Cellular) Inc. (Digicel) and E-Networks Inc. Configuration and customization for functional testing amongst the service providers and PXS including connection to the clearinghouse were completed. PXS conducted training sessions with the service providers and staff of the Commission on the administrative and technical porting aspects for number portability. The service providers initiated testing on the non-production platform for successful porting amongst each entity. All service providers are now connected to the production platform with PXS to begin porting and call routing tests. At the time of this publication, testing is ongoing. The Commission conducted multiple visits to each service provider during the testing phases, observing both successful and unsuccessful test scenarios. Live testing has entered its final stages and the Commission expects Number Portability to be launched within the calendar year of 2024.

Serving Areas of Telecommunications Services

The Commission has examined the reports from GTT and Digicel regarding their mobile and fixed-line services. GTT by licence provides fixed-line services (through both copper and fibre networks) and mobile services. The company in their submissions detailed the provision of second, third and fourth (2G/3G/LTE) generation mobile services through 129 cell sites covering various communities. Additionally, the company offers fixed-line services through both the copper and fibre networks. The copper network spans 443 areas providing voice and Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) services whilst the fibre network bundles voice and data services from 27 fibre sites.

On the other hand, Digicel focuses solely on mobile services and operates from 169 cell sites serving various communities within their area coverage with 2G/3G/LTE.

The table below shows areas (remote) that are receiving 2G/fixed line/DSL from GTT and GSM/HSPA/LTE from Digicel.

Region	Areas	GTT			Digicel
		Technology			
		Mobile	Fix Line		Mobile
1	Mabaruma	2G	Land line	No DSL	LTE
1	Port Kaituma	2G	Land line	No DSL	GSM; HSPA; LTE
9	Annai	2G			GSM; HSPA
9	Lethem	2G	Land line	DSL (Town only)	GSM; HSPA; LTE
10	Ituni	2G		DSL	GSM; HSPA
10	Kurupukari	2G			HSPA
10	Kwakwani	2G		DSL	GSM; HSPA; LTE

Further reviews of the submissions from GTT and Digicel revealed that in the town of Lethem there are currently 2G mobile and fixed-line services. However, only the residents of the township receive DSL from GTT. In contrast, Digicel provides mobile access to the entire community using 3G/LTE technology, offering consumers improved internet quality.

In Mabaruma and Port Kaituma, both of the Barima Waini region one (1) there is 2G and LTE mobile and fixed-line service but there is no available fixed broadband service to compliment the LTE mobile data service. Consumers from Ituni and Kwakwani, both areas located in the Upper Demerara Berbice region ten (10) are served with fixed broadband internet service. However, residents of Kurupukari, also of the Upper Demerara Berbice region ten (10) are only served with 2G services from GTT and 3G service from Digicel.

Cloud Voice and 3CX

GTT has informed the Commission of its rollout of the Cloud Voice Plan with 3CX, a phone system that is a software-based private branch exchange (PBX) phone system offered to the business community.

The emergence of cloud voice technology has revolutionized fixed-line PBX services offering a modern telephone solution managed by service providers while customers use handsets and associated applications. This cloud-based approach is ideal for businesses with existing or planned PBX systems on their premises.

One prominent application in this domain is 3CX, which is available for mobile phones (Android and Apple) as well as Windows desktops. Initially, PBX systems connected lines from service providers with limited internal lines for organization members. The evolution to IP PBX introduced unlimited internal lines due to IP-based provisioning.

3CX represents a significant advancement. It is downloadable on mobile devices and desktops enabling users to extend office communication beyond the physical office. It integrates with existing PBX and IP PBX systems via cloud voice solutions allowing internal calls through mobile handsets or desktops and expanding connectivity for more members of the organization. However, efforts by the Commission to ascertain the viability and success of this service have to date proved futile.

Conclusion

GPL could not have achieved the SAIFI and SAIDI targets due to the load shedding schedule which was implemented in the fourth quarter of 2023.

The company continues to delay the implementation of the SCADA software to link their existing smart meters currently installed at consumers premises which will eliminate the use of consumer voltage complaint as the reporting mechanism and would give the company the ability to identify and monitor voltage supplied and received by their consumers.

Overall, GPL's performance shows a mix of successes and failures and there are areas that need improvement with efforts to enhance reliability and to meet demand being a priority for the company.

GWI continued with the installation of meters for unmetered consumers to reduce non-revenue water which must be commended. By the end of 2023, 24,408 additional meters were installed which will be contributing to improved financial stability of the company and water conservation by consumers.

GWI provided water quality reports indicating that 13 out of 28 treatment facilities do not comply with WHO standards. The Commission has noted that the treatment plants are affected mainly by excess iron content in the water supplied to consumers. The company's Strategic Plan indicates that existing treatment plants will be upgraded to facilitate the improvement of water quality. The Commission is hoping that at the end of the next reporting period for 2024 the company will be able to achieve WHO standards.

In the telecommunications sector, significant strides were made throughout 2023 towards implementing Number Portability. The service providers are conducting their live testing which is in its final stages with Number Portability expected to be launched in 2024.

GTT has rolled out a Cloud Voice Plan with 3CX, a software-based private branch exchange phone system, targeting the business community who will mostly benefit. The Commission has noted that this 3CX implementation was introduced first in other countries and was widely used and benefited organizations and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Finance Division

Mrs. Yogwattie Sookram, Financial Analyst

Electricity Sector

The Guyana Power and Light Inc. (GPL) in addition to grappling with high oil prices in 2023, encountered challenges with a shortfall in power generation. In September 2023, the company faced a deficit in its generation capacity within the Demerara Berbice Interconnected System (DBIS). This shortfall resulted from the ongoing economic expansion and like the rest of the world, Guyana faced an unprecedented heat wave during that period, contributing to increased electricity consumption. Coupled with this, industrial consumers initially operating independently were integrated back into the grid in response to the high oil prices. To address this generation shortfall and based on an application by the company the Commission approved a Time of Use Tariff of G\$21.52 to be added to the existing rates for the company's Tariff D consumers, applying the rates during periods of peak demand. The Time of Use tariff came into effect on October 1, 2023, with the intention that it will be subject to review following the submission of the company's Interim Return Certificate for the year 2024 on January 28, 2024.

In the year 2023, GPL continued with the upgrade and expansion of its infrastructure and generation capacity to meet the growing demand of the country with the addition of five generators to its generation grid. The company at the end of 2023 had a generating capacity of approximately 206.3MWh to serve a total of 227,067 consumers connected to its transmission and distribution network.

The following is a brief overview of the Commission's regulatory exercises as it relates to the electricity sector for the year 2023.

Order No. 1 of 2023

The licence issued to GPL for the Supply of Electricity for Public Purposes was amended on October 4, 2010 expanding same to include the mandatory reporting by the power company of its operating standards and performance targets (OSPT). According to this amendment the company is required to submit its achievements related to these predefined standards and targets annually to the Commission before March 30th of each year. In compliance with this requirement, on March 29, 2023 the Commission conducted a public hearing, providing the power company with an opportunity to present its actual performance concerning each operating standard and performance target. A summary of the company's reported standards and targets for the year 2022 is provided below.

No.	Operating Standards and Performance Targets	Units	Target 2022	Actual 2022
1	<p>Customer Interruption</p> <p>GPL is required to report the index of the average number of interruption frequency (SAIFI) which measures the number of power outages and the index on the average hours of duration of the interruptions (SAIDI) which measures the number of hours each power outages are expected to last.</p>			
	System Average Interruption Frequency Index (SAIFI)	No.	90	94
	System Average Interruption Duration Index (SAIDI)	Hr.	95	96

2	<p>Voltage Regulation</p> <p>GPL is required to report annually on the level of voltage supplied to each consumer in adhering to the standard set for Voltage Regulation. The company however, has continuously indicated that it is difficult to measure, monitor and report on this standard. As an alternative it elected to report on the length of time to rectify consumers' complaints as it relates to voltage fluctuations.</p>			
3	<p>Meter Readings</p> <p>The number of maximum and non-maximum meters GPL read within a given month.</p>			
4	<p>Issuing of Bills</p> <p>The time it takes GPL to issue bills to both its maximum demand and non-maximum demand consumers.</p>			
5	<p>Accounts Receivable</p> <p>GPL is required to report on the number of days its debtors take to pay the company during the reporting year.</p>			
6	<p>Accounts Payable</p> <p>GPL is required to report on the number of days the company takes to settle payments with its creditors during the reporting year.</p>			
	<p>100% of other voltage customer complaints due to network reconfiguration, vegetation, upgrade of lines, additional transformers etc within 30 days</p>	%	98	96
	Maximum Demand Meters	%	97	92
	Non-Maximum Demand Meters	%	90	88
	Maximum Demand Consumers	Days	7	6
	Non-Maximum Demand Consumers	Days	10	8
		Days	30	14
		Days	26	21

7	System Losses GPL is required to report on the level of both its technical and non-technical (commercial) losses incurred by the company during the reporting year.	%	25	24.92
8	Average Availability The percentage of generating capacity available to the company throughout the reporting year.	%	85	84

Table 1

The Commission’s decision on the 2022 achievements of the company highlighted the company’s inability to reach most of its operating standards and performance targets. Nonetheless, the Commission acknowledged that since the initiation of the reporting criteria for these standards and targets, the company has significantly improved its efforts to achieve them. A notable accomplishment is the company’s dedication to reducing its system losses from a position of 31.60% as reported in the year 2011 to 24.92% at the end of year 2022. The graphical representation below depicts the changes in the company’s system losses over the period 2011 to 2022.

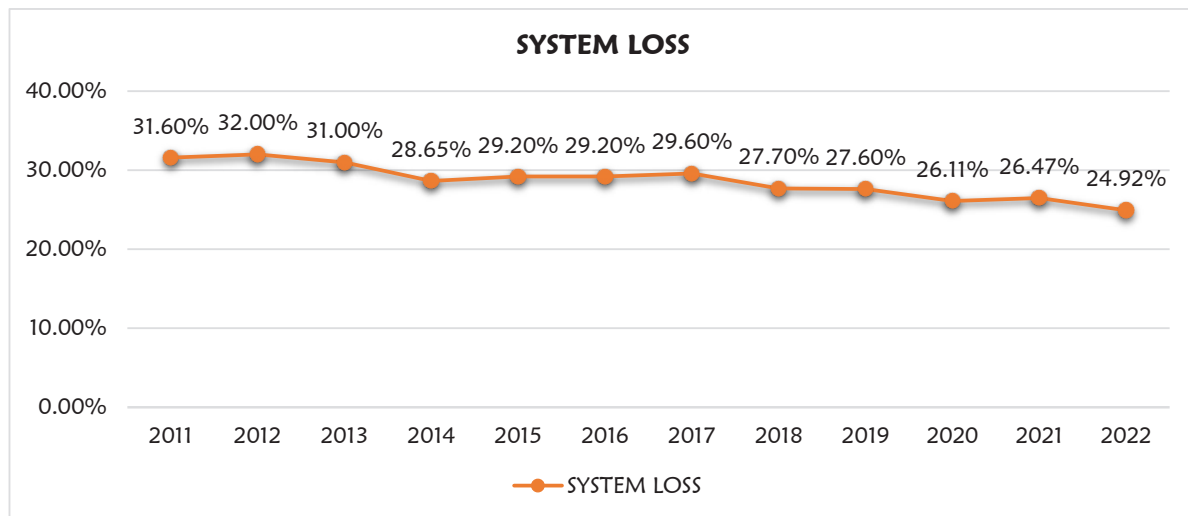


Figure 1 - Movement in System Losses from the year 2011 to 2022

The Commission is statutorily empowered as per the licence amendments to penalize the power company if it fails to meet any of its operating standards and performance targets. During the 2022 review, the Commission recognised that whilst some targets or standards were not met GPL was close to attaining the targets/standards set. However, after thorough consideration the Commission in its Order No. 1 of 2023 determined that penalizing the company for falling short in consumer interruptions, voltage regulation, meter reading and average availability standards and targets was unwarranted, notwithstanding the negative impact the foregoing had on its operations. This position taken by the Commission was in recognition of the GPL’s efforts to deliver dependable, cost-effective, and high-quality energy services to all customers.

Order No. 1 of 2023 can be accessed at <https://www.puc.org.gy/orders.php>.

Final Return Certificate

As outlined in Part B of the First Schedule of the Electricity Sector Reform Act 1999, GPL is required on an annual basis to prepare and submit its Interim Return Certificate (IRC) to the Commission by the 28th day of January each year and its Final Return Certificate (FRC) by the 30th day of April adhering to the formula as specified in its licence to supply electricity for public purposes.

In keeping with section 3 (2) of Part B of the Electricity Sector Reform Act 1999, the company submitted its IRC to the Commission for the unaudited financial operations of 2022. The certificate revealed a \$14.058 billion deficit for the year 2022 potentially necessitating a tariff increase in 2023 of 40.50% to offset this deficit as per the provisions of section 5 (4) of Part B of the Act. However, in 2023 the company decided against the implementation of tariff increases but rather absorbed the loss and transferred same to its Revenue Foregone Account. Notably, the power company has not increased tariffs in over nine years. Factoring in the fluctuating oil prices, there appears to be uncertainty about whether sustaining generating costs might hinder the company's infrastructural development.

On April 29, 2023 GPL submitted its FRC presenting the audited financial statements for the year 2022 together with its compliance certificate from their Independent Accountants. In January 2024, the IRC for the company's 2023 unaudited financials indicated a \$13.550 billion deficit, thereby suggesting a potential tariff increase of 33.94% in 2024 to address this shortfall.

Water Sector

The Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) has the responsibility of supplying safe drinking water to homes and offices across Guyana encompassing regions beyond the coastal areas. The company in the year 2023 continued its stride towards the attainment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 - *"Ensure access to water and sanitation for all"* with approximately 97.3% of Guyana's population now having access to potable water. The company earns its revenue primarily from the delivery of water and sewerage services to its customers, which as of December 31, 2023 amounted to 180,427, marking an increase of 0.70% from the previous year. In 2023, GWI produced approximately 182 million cubic meters of water for sale to consumers.

The Commission acknowledges the company's continued efforts in the effective metering of previously unmetered consumers. The installation of a total of 24,408 meters for the year 2023 has led to the metering of approximately 82% of its consumers. This is expected to contribute to a decrease in non-revenue water as it is the presumption that metered consumers who are billed based on their actual water consumption typically exhibit more responsibility in water usage which in turn leads to the reduction of water wastage. Additionally, the reduction in non-revenue water is anticipated to result in lowered production costs for the company and an enhancement of its overall revenue.

The Commission as part of its mandate monitored key aspects of the water company's operations during the year 2023 and this resulted in the issuance of Order 5 of 2023.

Order 5 of 2023

On October 5, 2023, GWI submitted an application to the Commission to review and vary its Order No. 2 of 2022. The company's application was premised on the grounds that the decision to increase the customer's credit limit conflicts with the provision of section 66 of the Water & Sewerage Act No. 5 of 2002 and that the setting of a credit limit is not within the remit of the Commission. The Commission in its 2022 Order had determined *inter alia* that with effect from January 1, 2023 the company is required to increase the credit limit for customers from \$10,000 to \$12,500 to allow customers an extended grace period for payments.

The Commission in arriving at its decision in Order No. 2 of 2022 considered the company's costing particularly

the expenses linked to reconnections and disconnections which surpassed the \$7,500 rate as established by the Commission in Order No. 2 of 2018. Additionally, during its deliberation of Order No. 2 of 2022, the Commission considered the argument presented by the Guyana Consumers Association (GCA) which relied on the United Nations Resolution 64/292 that there is an obligation to provide safe water and that concomitantly the removal of water connections infringes upon the human right to safe water. The Commission considered the Association's argument that the current tariff represents an excessively high reconnection rate, suggesting either no reconnection fee or a reduced fee of \$100 as an alternative. To balance consumer interests with those of the operator, the Commission concluded that setting a credit ceiling of \$12,500 would provide consumers with an extended grace period for payments.

The Commission after internal deliberations and considering the arguments presented by both GWI and GCA during the hearing on December 4, 2023 directed that the credit limit of \$12,500 be rescinded as initially established and increased by the Commission through Order No. 2 of 2022. Ultimately the Commission ordered that effective immediately the company's originally set credit limit of \$10,000, as outlined in Order No. 2 of 2022 be restored.

Order No. 5 of 2023 can be accessed at <https://www.puc.org.gy/orders.php>.

Telecommunications Sector

The telecommunications sector welcomed a fifth player, Quark Communications Inc. which company was granted a licence by the Government of Guyana on July 1, 2023 for the installation and operation of fixed and mobile public telecommunications networks and the provision of public telecommunications services. This addition brings the sector closer to the intent of liberalization which is to promote a free and competitive environment intended to result in greater choices, better quality of service, lower prices for consumers and fostering the expansion of telecommunications networks and services into unserved and underserved areas.

The landscape of the telecommunications sector since liberalization in the year 2020 has experienced significant growth in the provision of fixed internet services, with GTT Inc., E-Networks Inc. (ENet) and U-Mobile (Cellular) Inc. (Digicel) all offering services. An achievement in post-liberalization was the landing of a fibre cable in the Essequibo River thereby affording residents the access to reliable and high-speed fixed internet services. Today, several previously underserved or unserved areas enjoy access to fixed internet infrastructure providing internet access at a high bandwidth level and the optimum quality and speed of a 5th-Generation telecommunications service. The evolution of technology continues to guide the provision of mobile services in Guyana allowing subscribers the opportunity to access both the 4th Generation (LTE) and 5th Generation technologies on their mobile devices.

In keeping with its responsibility to promote a competitive sector and eliminate any barriers to competition, the Commission in December 2022 issued a Directive setting the fixed and mobile termination rates for interconnection based on a Benchmarking Methodology. The Commission ordered that the termination rates which had been in place since 2011 be reduced from \$14 to a fixed termination rate of \$8.71 and a mobile termination rate of \$11.42, effective for the period February 17, 2023 to February 16, 2024. In 2023, the Commission approved the Interconnection and Access Agreements between GTT, Digicel and E-Net through the issuance of Orders Nos. 2, 3, and 4 of 2023 with the fixed termination rates of \$8.71 and mobile termination rates of \$11.42.

Overview of the Telecommunications Sector for 2023

Mobile and Fixed Voice Subscribers.

In 2023, ENet entered the mobile market with the launch of its fifth generation (5G) mobile network signaling a new era for the mobile market in Guyana. The mobile sector at the end of 2023 is still dominated by the

incumbent mobile operators GTT and Digicel.

The demand for mobile services continues apace and the year 2023 saw further growth in mobile subscribers. The non-submission of information from ENet to the regulator has hampered the Commission’s ability to report on the number of mobile subscribers to its network and therefore the Commission based on prior information can only assume that a majority of the subscribers continue to utilize the services of either GTT or Digicel.

For the reporting year of 2023, the combined total of mobile subscribers from GTT and Digicel reached 772,985, indicating a 3.66% growth when compared to 2022. This increase in mobile subscribers may be as a consequence of the expansion in the nation’s oil and gas sector leading to an influx of international workers.

GTT continues to be the sole provider of fixed voice services through its plain switch telephone network (PSTN) and gigabyte passive optic network (GPON). The company’s subscribers to its PSTN network continue to decline year on year and at the end of 2023 the total subscribers to the network amounted to 77,592 reflecting a decrease of 20%. On the other hand, the company’s subscribers to the GPON service continue to increase indicating that subscribers to the copper fixed wireline services may have migrated to the GPON network thereby resulting in a decrease in the number of subscribers.

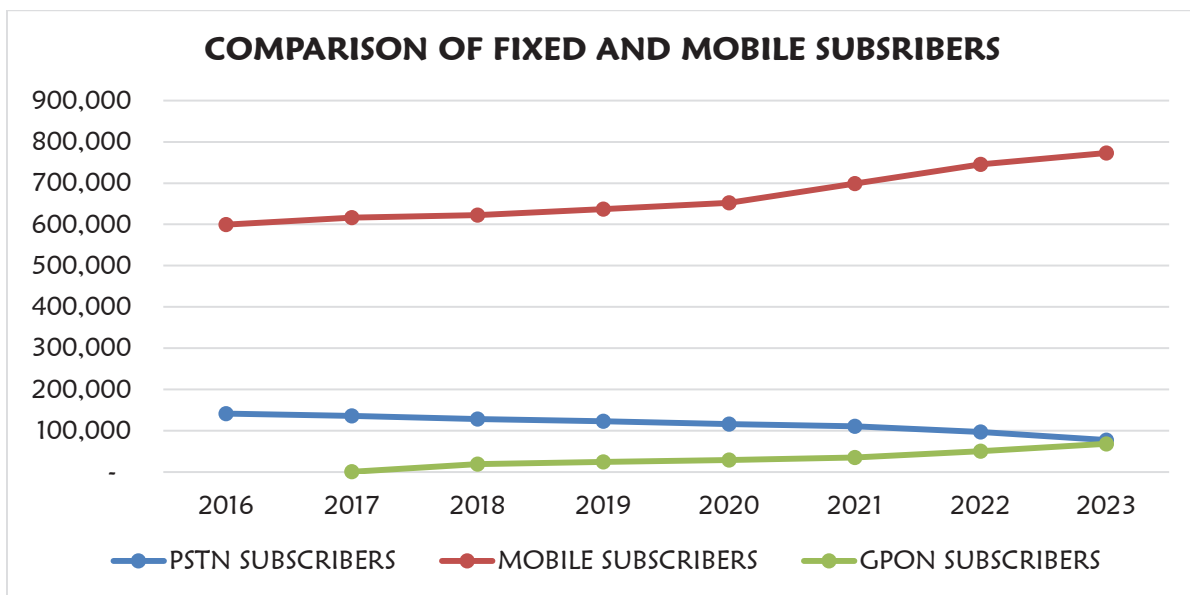


Figure 2: Movements in fixed wireline and mobile subscribers for a seven-year period

Mobile and Fixed Voice Traffic

The advancement of technology and the prevalence of a data-centric world have caused Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) applications to become the predominant mode of voice communication. Telecommunications service providers are grappling with diminishing voice traffic on both mobile and fixed networks.

The telecommunications landscape in Guyana mirrors this trend witnessing a continuous decline in local voice usage year after year. In 2023 this downward trajectory persisted for both mobile and fixed networks. Conversely, data usage on mobile networks experienced a notable surge reaching a combined total of around 26.33 billion megabytes in 2023—a 50% increase compared to the preceding year. The heightened sale of mobile data underscores consumers’ preference for over-the-top (OTTs) technologies like WhatsApp and Facetime messenger services for voice communication as opposed to traditional voice services on mobile networks.

Mobile voice usage on calls within Guyana declined by 10% in 2023 when compared to the year 2022, and local minutes of use on fixed networks (PSTN and GPON networks) saw a further decline of 33% compared to 2022. This shift in consumer behavior confirms the prevalent use of OTTs services over traditional voice services.

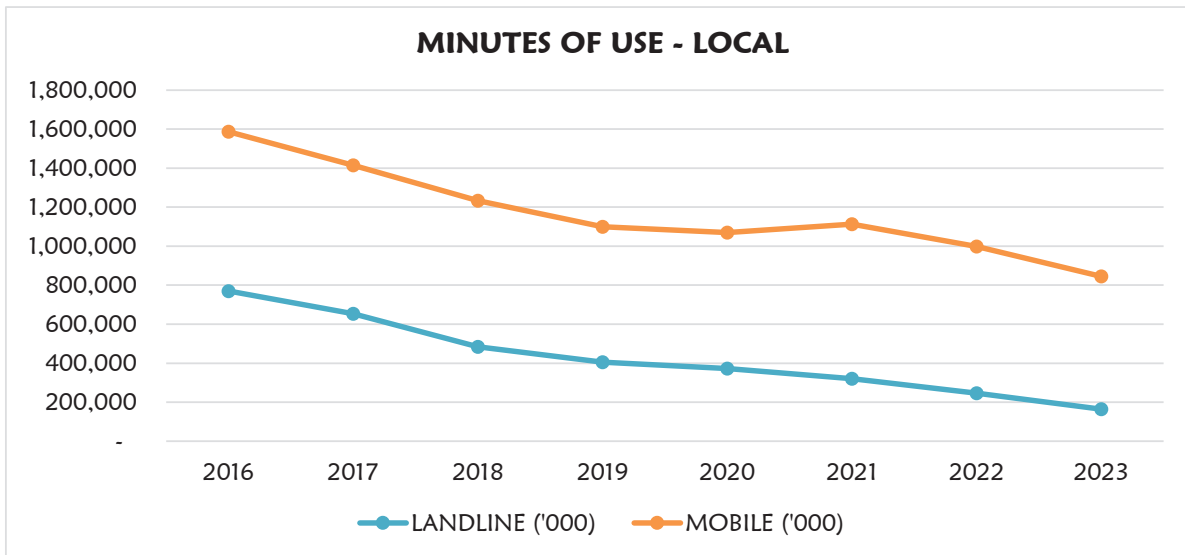


Figure 2: Movements of local minutes for both the mobile and wireline networks for the past eight years

Whilst there was an upward movement in both inbound and outbound minutes on the international gateway from 2021 to 2022 there has been a decline in 2023. Outbound minutes of use declined by 11% while inbound minutes declined by 29% when compared to 2022.

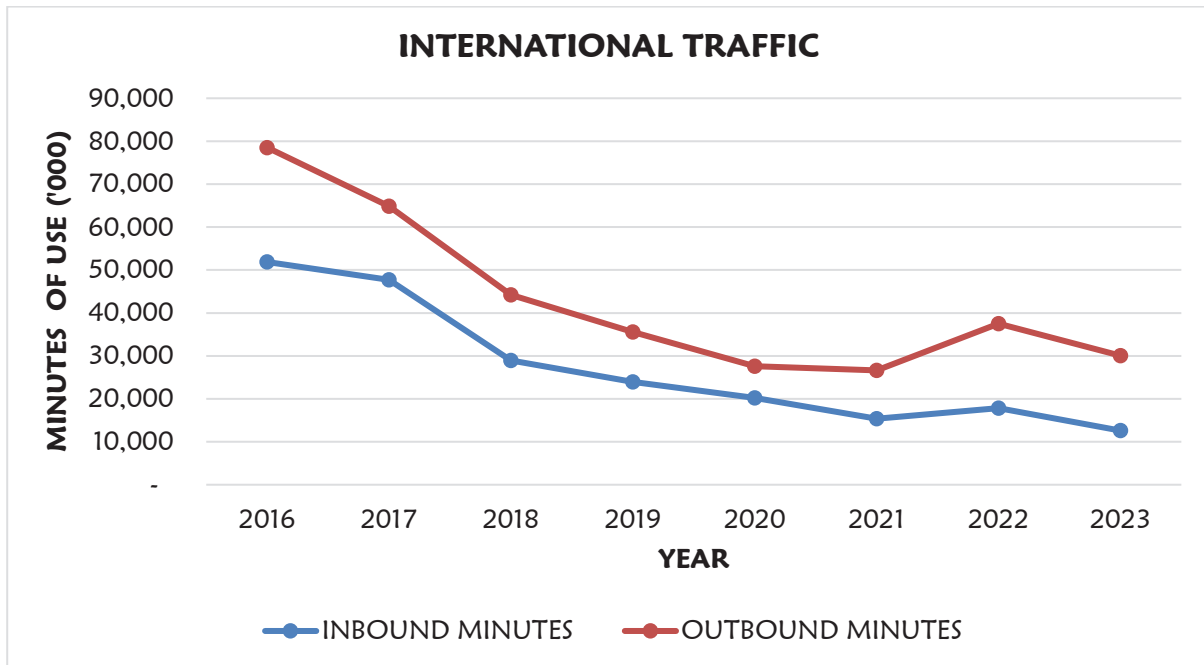


Figure 3: Movements of voice traffic on the international gateway for the past eight years.

Fixed Internet Services

The landscape of the fixed internet segment in the telecommunications sector continues to evolve with service providers vying for an expanded market share. This competitiveness is characterized by the offering of innovative internet packages designed to cater to the growing demand for increased internet speeds. Service providers continuously expand their services into underserved and unserved areas in 2023 bridging the digital divide gap in the country. Fixed internet services in 2023 are provided by GTT, ENet and Digicel.

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL)

Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) a type of internet access through wireline infrastructure played a pivotal role in bringing high-speed and wireless internet to Guyana. GTT stands as the only provider of DSL internet services and by the end of 2023 its subscriber base amounted to 23,179 representing a decline of 40% compared to the previous year.

Fibre to the Home (FTTH)

In 2023, the subscribers to FTTH services for the three operators amounted to 108,391 representing a 27% increase compared to 2022. The focus of operators on offering FTTH services has been apparent as they compete through fixed internet bundles providing higher speeds and value-added services. This coupled with the continuous upgrade and expansion of their fiber infrastructure and the migration of DSL services to Fiber services may have contributed to the increase in the number of FTTH subscribers.

Conclusion

The Commission recognizes the fiscal impact of losses, including system losses and non-revenue water, on the two public utilities and commends the efforts, both in terms of infrastructural development and operational changes, to combat and reduce these losses. As we move forward into a dynamic and oil-rich economy, the Commission is optimistic that the infrastructural development of both Guyana Power and Light Inc. and Guyana Water Inc. will result in efficient and reliable services readily available throughout Guyana.

The intent of a liberalized sector is slowly becoming a reality as telecommunications service providers continue to compete for market share through technological development and continuous expansion of their services. The Commission believes that as operators are forced to compete in a data-centric world, access to internet infrastructure will become a necessity for their financial sustainability, thereby compelling the expansion of internet access in the country.

In conclusion, the Commission commits to embracing innovation and fostering competition and recognizes that effective regulation is essential in contributing to the financial well-being of utilities, ultimately contributing to the long-term socioeconomic development of the citizens of Guyana.

A hand is holding a white card that is tilted. The word "COMPLAINT" is printed on the card in large, bold, red capital letters. The background is dark and out of focus.

COMPLAINT

Complaints Division

Ms. Destra Bourne – Complaints' Manager

Overview

The Complaints Division of the Commission plays a crucial role in facilitating communication and addressing grievances between consumers and service providers under the Commission’s purview. The Division has the responsibility of monitoring the quality of services and performance of the service providers in the telecommunications, electricity and water sectors for compliance with the regulations. Serving also as the public relations arm of the Commission, the Division aims to enhance transparency and accountability within the sectors under its scope by providing consumers with the tools regarding the work of the Commission in addition to their rights and responsibilities.

Overview of Complaints Received

The Commission in the year 2023 received a total of 256 complaints, reflecting a decrease of 30.81% in complaints received when compared to the previous year 2022, where 370 complaints were filed with the Commission. The complaints filed against the Guyana Telephone & Telegraph Company Inc. (GTT) and Guyana Power & Light Inc. (GPL) decreased by 31.45% from 159 to 109 matters and 41.78% from 146 to 85 matters respectively. Meanwhile, the number of complaints against E-Networks Inc. (ENet) and Guyana Water Inc. (GWI) remained consistent at 2 and 60 respectively. The Commission in the reporting year did not receive complaints against U-Mobile (Cellular) Inc. (Digicel).

The decline in overall complaints against service providers suggests changes in the quality of service provided and consumer satisfaction levels.

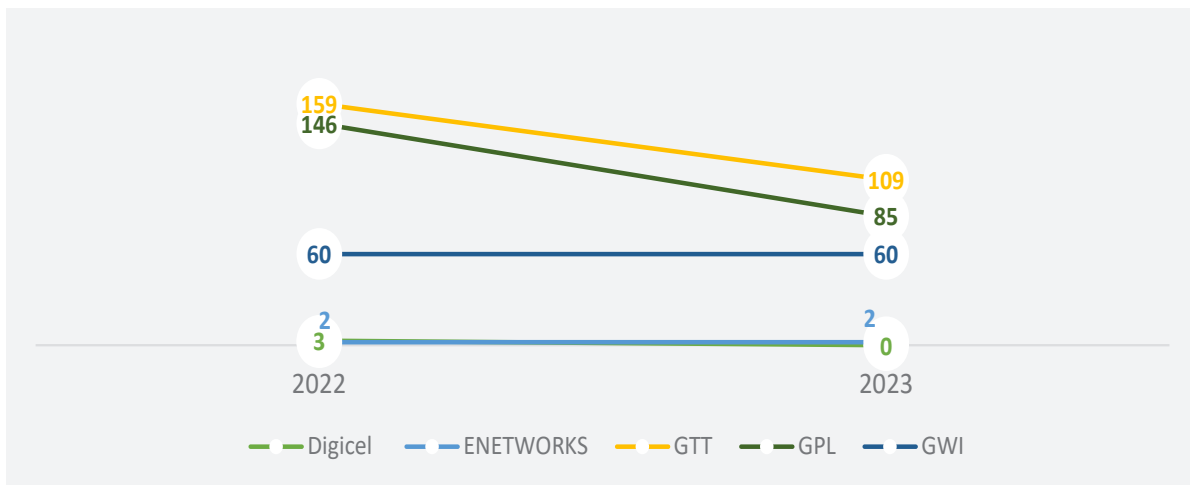


Chart 1: Complaints received in 2022 and 2023

Whilst there was a decrease in the number of complaints received by the Commission, matters regarding technical issues remain the highest number of complaints in 2023 at 41%. This suggests that despite efforts by the service providers to improve their customer service and experience it appears that greater effort would be required towards addressing complaints which are technical in nature. Further, the prominence of technical issues stresses the importance of a targeted and effective approach to address and resolve challenges within the stipulated time frames.

Further, 31% of the complaints received represented issues with customers’ billings and 12% represented matters as it relates to the tampering of the service. The remaining 16% of complaints received were with respect to application for service, disconnection of service, claims for compensation, reconnection of service, security deposit refund, termination of service and transfer of service.

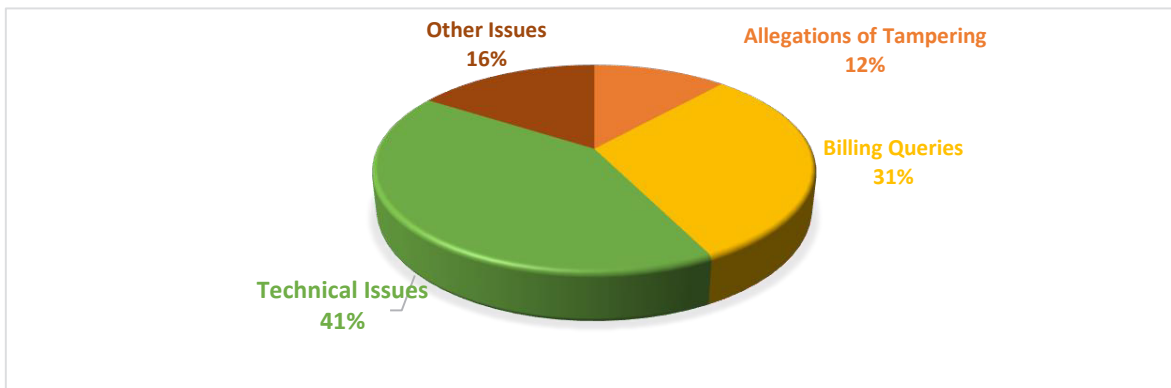


Chart 2: The types of complaints filed with the Commission.

A review of the complaints received in 2023 highlights a preference amongst consumers for filing their grievances via the telephone.

The records indicate that 48% of consumers opted to file via telephone, followed by 31% who visited the Commission’s offices in person. Additionally, 13% of complaints were submitted via email whilst the remaining 8% were divided between filing through the postal services (5%) and WhatsApp (3%).

Complaints by Region

The continuation of the trend in 2023 where the majority of complaints stemmed from regions near the Commission’s offices with 87.5% originating from regions 4 and 6 (Demerara – Mahaica and East Berbice – Corentyne) prompts several suggestions. These include the possibility that consumers in other regions are satisfied with the services they receive, they exercise restraint in awaiting issue resolution from the service providers or that service providers are generally more efficient in providing services, addressing and resolving complaints.

The Commission however remains vigilant in identifying the dynamics at play and exploring innovative strategies to serve consumers more effectively. The goal is to ensure that every consumer regardless of their location has access to a responsive and efficient platform for addressing concerns and resolving issues with their service providers.

Complaints Received per Sector

Telecommunications Sector

In 2023, the number of complaints against GTT decreased by 31% when compared to the 159 matters received in the previous year. Of the 109 complaints received against GTT, 94% were formally resolved, 4% were resolved through telephone intervention by the Commission to the company, 1% was withdrawn by the customer as the company rectified the issue upon the filing of the complaint and the remaining 1% was rejected by the Commission since the action taken by the service provider was in line with its terms and conditions for service. Upon closer examination of the complaints against GTT, it appears that consumers were primarily concerned with the resolution timeframes of technical issues which constituted 61% of all complaints received against the company. Billing concerns were the second most common cases, representing 26%. The remaining 13% were for matters inclusive of applications for service, compensation, disconnection of services, reconnection of services, termination of services and other miscellaneous issues.

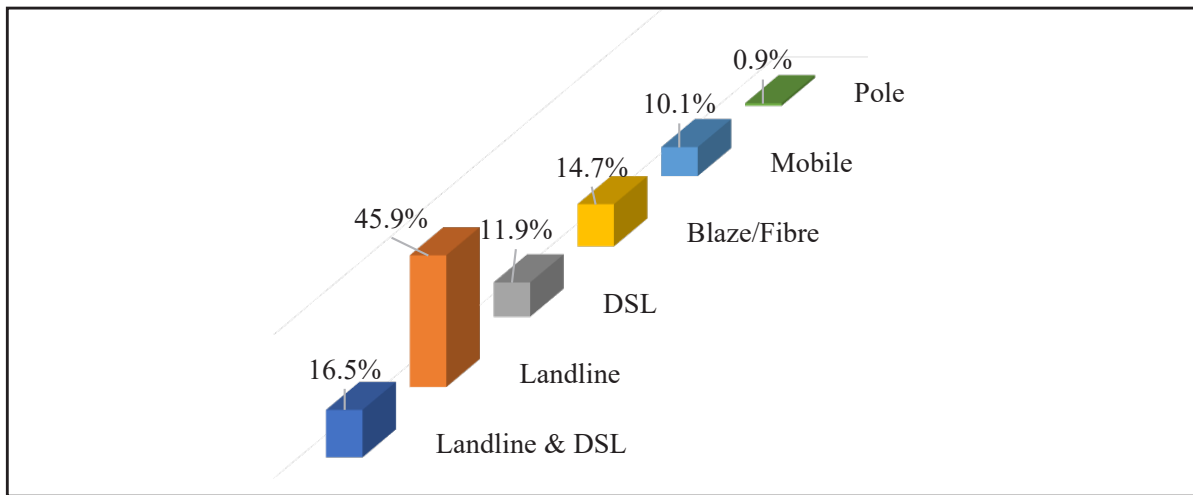


Chart 3: GTT services

The breakdown of complaints received regarding GTT services revealed that 45.9% of consumers expressed grievances with the landline services. Complaints involving both landline and Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) internet services comprised 16.5%, whilst the issues with the fibre services accounted for 14.7%, DSL internet service issues represented 11.9%, mobile service issues represented 10.1%, and issues regarding defective poles accounted for 0.9%. The majority of complaints against GTT were related to issues with the landline and DSL internet services. As of December 31, 2023, 98.2% of complaints filed against the company were successfully resolved within a response time frame of 12 days. This indicates the company’s responsiveness in addressing and resolving issues filed with the Commission.

The Complaints Division received no complaints against Digicel whilst two (2) complaints were received against ENet pertaining to billing issues, specifically the renewal of data plans.

Electricity Sector

There was a decrease of 41.8% from the 146 cases filed against GPL in 2022 to 85 matters in 2023. The highest number of complaints against this service provider was in relation to the claim of unauthorized alteration or interference with the electricity infrastructure, meters, or equipment. This accounts for 35.3% of the complaints filed against the power company. Issues such as voltage fluctuations, meter malfunctions and damaged poles amounted to 27.1%. Billing issues represented 22.3% and the remaining 15.3% included issues with service applications, claims for compensation for damage to appliances, disconnection of service, delays in security deposit refunds and other miscellaneous issues.

Meetings with the service provider were held primarily to address backlogged matters. Undue delays in responding to issues or resolving disputes where there are conflicting opinions are amongst some of the other reasons for collaboration. In 2023, there was a reduction in meetings held to resolve cases filed against GPL which may be an indication of the company’s improvement in addressing and resolving complaints. As of December 31, 2023 21% of the cases against GPL were pending resolution. A significant majority, 77.8% of these pending cases were received in the last quarter of 2023.

Water Sector

Billing issues which represented 50% of the complaints filed against GWI were the highest number of cases filed with the Commission against the water company in 2023. This was followed by issues as it relates to leakage and meter functionality, which represented 28% of the complaints filed. The remaining 22% encompassed

issues concerning service applications, disconnections and reconnections.

As of December 31, 2023 20% of the complaints received against GWI were unresolved.

Credits Awarded

Credits refer to amounts paid to a customer’s account for the reversal of an amount billed or applied to an account by the service provider for the breach of standards. During the year in review a total of \$14,387,133 was awarded to consumers who filed complaints with the Commission, see Table 1 below. This sum represents compensation for damage to appliances, adjustments for billing errors, penalties for breach of service standards and reimbursements for services which were not provided.

Service Provider	Georgetown Office	Berbice Office	Linden Office	Total
E-Networks	\$ 4,600.00			\$ 4,600.00
GPL	\$ 11,236,314.00	\$ 868,026.00		\$ 12,104,340.00
GTT	\$ 1,462,413.00	\$ 379,888.00	\$ 1,049.00	\$ 1,843,350.00
GWI	\$ 196,563.00	\$ 158,568.00	\$ 79,712.00	\$ 434,843.00
Total	\$ 12,899,890.00	\$ 1,406,482.00	\$ 80,761.00	\$ 14,387,133.00

Table 1: Credits received.

Additionally, for cases filed before the year under review but resolved in 2023 credit adjustments and compensation were also awarded. This resulted in the sum of \$47,913,418 awarded to consumers during the year 2023.

Public Relations

In 2023, the Commission utilised diverse media channels such as Facebook, television advertisements, radio interviews, face-to-face awareness exercises, poster distributions and webinars to reach a wide audience throughout Guyana. The objective was to inform consumers about the Commission and to empower them to make informed choices whilst fostering a sense of accountability amongst the service providers.

Community face-to-face engagements reached 350 consumers in various areas including Islington and Gay Park in New Amsterdam; Lesbeholden and Whim in Corentyne; Parika on the East Bank of Essequibo; Half Mile and Wisroc Housing Schemes in Wismar Linden; and Anna Regina; Charity; Suddie; and Cotton Field on the Essequibo Coast.

In March and May 2023 webinars were conducted by the Commission on the topics ‘*Consumers Take the Driver’s Seat: A Discussion of Your Rights and Responsibilities*’ and ‘*Telecoms Sector in Guyana: Navigating this New Frontier*’ respectively.

The Webinar titled ‘*Consumer Take the Driver’s Seat*’ was moderated by Ms. Elizabeth Bennet-Marsh, Public Education Specialist from the Office of Utilities Regulation in Jamaica. Leveraging her extensive expertise, she engaged the panellists and approximately 50 participants via the PUC’s Zoom platform. Key personnel from regulatory bodies in Guyana and Trinidad and the Guyana Consumers Association (GCA) discussed the crucial role of safeguarding consumer rights. Highlighted were the integration of consumer rights into service providers’ licenses and the Commission’s role; consumer protection and the challenges faced by regulators in monitoring service providers and the importance of consumer protection in Guyana. The GCA emphasized the need for further action, noting widespread dissatisfaction amongst consumers with the services in Guyana.

The webinar on *'Navigating the New Frontier'* attracted approximately 80 participants via the Zoom platform and over 800 viewers on Facebook. This session commenced with remarks from the Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission Guyana, who highlighted the liberalization of the telecommunications sector, new entrants in the telecommunications sector and the impending implementation of Number Portability. Panellists included representatives from telecommunications service providers such as Digicel, ENet and GTT together with the Telecommunications Agency and the Guyana Consumers Association. Issues ranged from infrastructure upgrades and cybersecurity to enhanced customer care, universal service and affordable and reliable connections. The discussions were moderated by Ms. Michele Marius, Director of ICTPULSE Consulting Limited in Kingston, Jamaica who skillfully navigated the discourses with her expertise.

On June 21, 2023 the Chairman of the Commission was featured as the primary guest on the ICTPULSE podcast, an online platform dedicated to discussing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) issues from a Caribbean perspective. The Chairman stated that Guyana's topography helped create the backdrop for the challenges of connectivity. The conversation delved into the progression of Guyana's telecommunications sector and its regulatory framework as well as strategies for bridging the digital divide in the region, the role and responsibilities of the Commission, its effectiveness in overseeing a burgeoning market and the imminent introduction of Number Portability in Guyana, as well as the quality of telecommunications services in the country. The podcast episode is available for listening at: <https://www.ict-pulse.com/2023/06/ictp-257-accelerating-the-development-of-guyanas-telecoms-sector-with-dela-britton-of-the-public-utilities-commission-guyana/>.

Consumer Protection

As mandated by the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection) Regulations 2020 each telecommunications service provider is required to submit quarterly and yearly reports of their quality of service achievements to the Commission. These reports play a crucial role in informing the Commission of the telecommunications service provider's achievement of the standards as outlined in Schedules 1 and 2 of the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection) Regulations 2020. The performance logs serve to validate and verify the information presented by the service providers.

The following is a summary of the reports that have been submitted to the Commission as of the end of the third quarter of 2023.

Residential Narrowband (voice) Access

Initial connection of service

GTT reported that the mandated standards for the supply time of initial connections set at 5 days for urban areas and 14 days for rural areas were not obtained. The company informed that these time frames are effective provided that the facilities are in place. GTT proposed that the time frames be specified in terms of working days and implemented once facilities are available.

Unreported and Reported Faults

The company fell short of the standards outlined for the clearance of both unreported and reported faults which mandate 100% resolution within 24-hours. GTT reported that on average only 92.61% of unreported faults and 47.33% of reported faults were cleared within the stipulated 24-hour time frame. No reported faults were resolved within six (6) hours of being reported. The company previously communicated to the Commission in 2021 and 2022 that the standards for reported and unreported faults were unattainable. In 2022 the Commission conducted a consultation and new standards for fault clearance were recommended to the Honourable Prime Minister, Brigadier (Ret'd) Mark Anthony Phillips M.S.S, MP whose determination is pending.

The company met the required standards for the percentage of calls to operator services and directory enquiry services answered within 10 seconds (95% each), the number of billing errors per 1000 bills (3), and the percentage of billing complaints resolved within specified time frames. Additionally, the standards for local and national long distance calls for residential customers and international long distance calls for residential customers were achieved.

Broadband Internet Services for Residential Customers

The mandated standards require broadband services to be connected within six (6) days for urban areas and twenty (20) days for rural areas, with 99% of technical complaints resolved within 36-hours. Billing related standards include having no more than three (3) billing errors per 1000 bills and resolving 100% of billing complaints within 3 weeks.

As of the second and third quarters of 2023, ENet reported adherence to all specified standards. ENet's report for the first quarter of 2023 was not submitted to the Commission.

GTT reported that the supply time for initial connection services in urban and rural areas fell short, with reported durations of seven (7) and twenty (20) working days respectively. No reasons were forthcoming.

The company failed to meet standards for its Broadband services (Gigabyte Passive Optical Network (GPON) and DSL), resolving an average of 53% of technical complaints for GPON services and 52% for DSL services within 36 hours. Standards for billing errors and billing complaints were achieved.

It is to be noted that in 2021 and 2022, GTT communicated to the Commission that the standards were unattainable, as documented on page 40 in the Commission's 2022 Annual Report.

Mobile Public Telecommunications Services

GTT reported that the prescribed standards for mobile public telecommunications services were achieved. Digicel reported that the standards were achieved save and except for the percentage of calls set up within five (5) seconds, where the company attained 87.47%. Digicel attributed the inability to meet the standard of 90% to the unassigned spectrum assignments requested in November 2021.

ENet failed to submit a report on its mobile public telecommunications services despite several correspondence from the Commission requesting the company to submit the report in accordance with the Telecommunications (Consumer Protection) Regulations 2020.

The performance logs submitted by GTT and Digicel corroborated their respective submissions.

ENet has been tagged for its failure to submit its statutory compliances to the Commission as it relates to its performance logs for its broadband internet services for residential customers as well as performance logs and reports for its mobile public telecommunications services.

Conclusion

As of December 31, 2023, the Commission successfully resolved 224 of the 256 consumer complaints, representing an impressive resolution rate of 87.5%. This achievement is attributed to the dedication of the Commission's Complaints Department staff and the cooperation of service providers' representatives.

The decline in overall complaints together with a reduction in meetings and pending cases by the end of 2023, indicates positive shifts in consumer interactions with service providers. The Commission remains committed to collaborative efforts with stakeholders to ensure consumers are informed and receive the quality of service they deserve.

In 2024, the Division will explore more innovative strategies to enhance the consumer awareness arm of the Complaints Division and will continue to monitor service providers for regulatory compliance which will in turn foster a safe and competitive environment for both consumers and service providers.

The Commission remains steadfast in its commitment to facilitating a seamless and satisfactory experience for both consumers and service providers.



Accounts Division

Financial Review of the Commission 2023

Mr. Elroy Halley – Senior Officer, Accounts Division

The Accounts Division is responsible for the effective management of the Commission's financial operations. The Division's role is to ensure accountability, transparency and the safe custody of the Commission's financial assets and resources. It is prudent to note that the Division's day-to-day financial management is guided by the PUC Act of 2016 and the Fiscal Management and Accounting Act of 2003.

The Commission's budget which is required to be approved by the National Assembly, is funded by assessment fees levied upon the public utilities under its purview in accordance with section 64 of the PUC Act 2016. For the fiscal year 2023, the Commission's budget amounted to \$244,700,000, which represents a 6.1% increase from the fiscal year 2022. This increase was attributed to factors such as the 6.5% retroactive government salary increase and other increases in supplies and services as a consequence of inflation in Guyana. This amount was allocated to cover costs such as employment, professional fees, utility charges and other costs associated with the execution of its mandate.

The calculation of assessment fees is outlined in section 64 of the PUC Act 2016 which provides that the annual assessment fees imposed should not exceed one percent (1%) of the gross revenue derived from services or one hundred million dollars (\$100,000,000), whichever is less. This amount is prorated to ensure that an equitable contribution is made by each service provider.

The Division contributed to the Commission's continued efforts to increase capacity building by conducting training exercises on taxation and the telecommunications rate application notification process.

In conclusion, the Commission ended the financial year 2023 with a positive cash flow and a strong financial position whilst effectively performing its mandate and seeks to maintain this position in the year 2024.

As follows are the Audited Financial Statements for the year ending December 31, 2023.

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Statement of Financial Position
As at December 31, 2023

	2023	2022
	G\$	G\$
Assets		
Non-Current Assets		
Property/Plant/Equipment	93,137,460	97,205,174
Total Non-Current Assets	93,137,460	97,205,174
Current Assets		
Receivables	303,874	603,851
Prepayments	352,697	247,986
Cash and Cash Equivalents	412,682,962	367,497,848
Total Current Assets	413,339,533	368,349,685
TOTAL ASSETS	506,476,993	465,554,859
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
Retained Earnings	496,111,701	454,755,359
Revaluation Reserves	10,361,800	10,361,800
Total Equity	506,473,501	465,117,159
Current Liabilities		
Payables	-	397,150
Accruals	3,492	40,550
Total Current Liabilities	3,492	437,700
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	506,476,993	465,554,859

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Statement of Profit or Loss
For the year ended December 31, 2023

	2023	2022
	G\$	G\$
Income		
Assessment Fees	244,700,002	185,108,427
Interest Earned	6,721,439	6,576,011
Sale of Fixed Asset	11,548	-
Total Income	251,432,989	191,684,438
Expenses		
Employment Cost	173,896,127	155,120,809
Training Conference and Official Visits	1,424,529	886,920
Administration Expenses	18,151,490	12,629,395
Utility Charges	2,308,996	4,529,058
Security Charges	6,284,592	5,397,330
Rent Charges	2,100,000	2,460,000
Repairs and Maintenance	1,634,456	1,800,291
Depreciation	4,044,773	6,432,937
Rate and Taxes	231,684	231,688
Total Expenses	210,076,647	189,488,428
Net Surplus	41,356,342	2,196,010

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Statement of Changes in Equity
For the year ended December 31, 2023

	Retained Earnings	Revaluation Surplus	Total Accumulated Fund
	G\$	G\$	G\$
Balance as at January 1, 2022	452,574,877	10,361,800	462,936,677
Adjustments	(15,528)	-	(15,528)
Net deficit for the period	2,196,010	-	2,196,010
Balance as at December 31, 2022	<u>454,755,359</u>	<u>10,361,800</u>	<u>465,117,159</u>
	G\$	G\$	G\$
Balance as at January 1, 2023	454,755,359	10,361,800	465,117,159
Net surplus for the period	41,356,342	-	41,356,342
Balance as at December 31, 2023	<u>496,111,701</u>	<u>10,361,800</u>	<u>506,473,501</u>

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Statement of Cash Flows
For the year ended December 31, 2023

	2023	2022
	G\$	G\$
Cash Flow from Operating Activities		
Net Surplus	41,356,342	2,196,010
<i>Adjustments to reconcile net income to net cash provided by operating activities:</i>		
Depreciation	4,044,773	6,432,937
Gain on sale of FA	(11,548)	-
(Increase)/decrease in accounts receivable	299,977	(603,851)
Increase/(decrease) in accounts payables	(397,150)	(1,595,675)
(Increase)/decrease prepayments	(104,711)	58,578
Increase/(decrease) in accruals	(37,058)	(55,286)
Deferred Income	-	(40,000)
Net cash and cash equivalents from operating activities	45,150,625	6,392,713
 Cash flows from Investing Activities		
Proceeds from sale of FA	158,250	-
Purchase of equipment	(123,761)	(321,000)
Purchase of furniture	-	(31,000)
Net cash used in investing activities	34,489	(352,000)
 Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	45,185,114	6,040,713
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of period	367,497,848	361,457,135
Cash and cash equivalents at end of period	412,682,962	367,497,848

Filing a Complaint

Any consumer who has a complaint against a public utility or telecommunications undertaking should firstly engage with the relevant service provider. After exhausting all avenues at the service provider's level, the consumer may file a complaint with the Commission.

Complainants are required to provide to the PUC all relevant corroborating information/documentation to support their filing, such as bills, reference numbers issued and investigation reports.

PUC Website

The PUC website accessed at www.puc.org.gy, serves as a user-friendly gateway to the array of services and resources provided by the Commission. The website is designed to empower individuals with comprehensive information pertaining to the Commission's mandate, public notices, the relevant Acts, Regulations and orders issued by the Commission.

Visitors to the website will find a streamlined process for the online submission of complaints which is a convenient medium for users to voice their concerns. Additionally, the website serves as a valuable resource for details on the Commission's public relations initiatives and upcoming events, including public hearings and webinars. Visitors to the website can access audio transcripts of past public hearings.

Contact Us

**HELP DESK - MONDAY – THURSDAY – 8:00 hrs. to 16:30 hrs.
FRIDAY: 8:00 hrs. to 15:30 hrs.**

Georgetown Office:



Lot 106, New Garden Street, Queenstown, Georgetown



Telephone - 592-226-7042 or 592-227- 2182

Berbice Office:



Lot AV, Free Yard, Port Mourant, Corentyne, Berbice



Telephone - 592- 336-6077 or 592-336-6192

Linden Office:



Lot 97-98 Republic Avenue, Mackenzie, Linden.



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