

REDACTED

Case No. 18-3231-PET
Petition of DPS into Service Quality Provided by Consolidated
Direct Testimony of Fred Goldstein and Barlow Keener
April 26, 2019
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13 **Q37. Do customers agree with Consolidated that out-of-state workers are as efficient**
14 **and timely as full-time workers?**

15 A37. No. Customer comments made at the November 26, 2018 public hearing held in
16 Readsboro indicate that Consolidated customers do not believe contractors to be as
17 efficient and timely as full-time workers. One particular customer described his
18 experience with a technician from eastern Massachusetts who was unfamiliar with the
19 area and had trouble determining the location of the facility needing repair. He
20 described the worker as having to use maps and road signs to determine the location
21 because he did not have cell service to assist him.

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1 **Q38. Do customers believe Consolidated full-time workers to be efficient and timely in**
2 **making repairs?**

3 A38. Public comment in this case suggests that even Consolidated's full-time workers have
4 difficulty locating facilities, either because of unfamiliarity with the area, because plant
5 records are deficient, or both. At the same public hearing in Readsboro, a customer
6 described a Consolidated worker being unfamiliar with the off-road area where the
7 particular Consolidated facility was located, which ultimately resulted in long repair
8 delays.

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22 **Q47. Do customers believe there to be workforce diversion?**

1 A47. Yes. Comments from Consolidated customers at public hearings and public comments
2 filed in this proceeding relay statements made to them by Consolidated field technicians
3 that indicate a limited number of technicians are available to respond to troubles and
4 requests for installation. This suggests that too few field technicians are available to
5 respond to telephone customer needs which, in turn, contributes to Consolidated's
6 inability to meet the 5903 Standards.

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8 **Q48. Please describe public comments that illustrate the workforce diversion.**

9 A48. One Consolidated customer filed a public comment on November 28, 2018
10 communicating that during a repair visit, a Consolidated service technician, who
11 traveled from northern New Hampshire to Stowe to make the repair, stated that there
12 are very few field services technicians left in the company. Another attendee of the
13 Readsboro public hearing stated that a technician told her the company laid off 20 out
14 of 25 field technicians and that there are just five of them for all of southern Vermont.

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4 **Q53. Does public sentiment support the assertion that Consolidated's performance on**
5 **key service quality metrics is worse in areas of the state where customers lack**
6 **competitive alternatives?**

7 A53. Yes. Comments from public hearings, public comments filed with the Commission in
8 this proceeding and complaints received by CAPI overwhelmingly support the assertion
9 that Consolidated's performance is worse in areas where customers lack a competitive
10 alternative. As they are described in the testimony of Carol Flint, CAPI complaints are
11 a good predictor of the level of customer dissatisfaction overall, because there are
12 typically many more customers with the same service problems who did not contact
13 CAPI but instead continued to try to resolve their trouble with Consolidated. It is
14 therefore reasonable to conclude that the level of customer dissatisfaction with
15 Consolidated's service quality, including its inability to meet the TC24 metric, has not
16 improved and may be worse.

17

18 **Q54. Please describe an instance where public sentiment supports this assertion.**

19 A54. One example of this assertion is a February 9, 2019 letter (as corrected on February 11,
20 2019) to the Commission from Representative Laura Sibilila. In the letter,
21 Representative Sibilila illustrated how her constituents in southern Vermont have the
22 least reliable service of any Consolidated customers and that common problems include

1 “chronic poor sound quality” and “[p]oor phone service quality when it rains.” She
2 highlighted the fact that without reliable telephone service, Consolidated customers are
3 hindered in their work and personal life and lack the ability to call for help in the case
4 of an accident, medical emergency, or crime. She also commented on her constituent’s
5 assertions regarding Consolidated’s staffing reductions, which have made it very
6 difficult for the outside plant workforce to keep up with repairs and installations. She
7 asserted that her constituents were told it would be months to get new residential phone
8 service installed and that repair times were regularly quoted to be in the 5 to 10-day
9 range. She also stated that during a chance meeting with Consolidated’s chief executive
10 officer, he inquired why her constituents don’t move somewhere with better telephone
11 service.
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