

# Waterloo North Hydro's next generation CIS: preparing for the future

When Waterloo North Hydro (WNH) replaced its aging Customer Information System (CIS), it chose outside of the box thinking over an out-of-the-box solution.

Rather than looking at existing software, WNH decided to work with a vendor to design and implement a made for Ontario CIS solution. Partnering with JOMAR Softcorp International, an Ontario-based software company, WNH was able to create a next generation product that can effectively deploy changes required for regulatory initiatives and meet customer needs while keeping capital costs reasonable and lowering ongoing operating costs.

## MEETING THE CHALLENGE

The resulting system streamlined WNH's business processes by integrating customer data, including billing and payment information, into WNH's financial software, the Meter Data Management (MDM) system, and the Outage Management System (OMS). The next generation technology also allowed for improvements to existing business practices. For example, integrating the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) system allows for meter pings based on information in the MDM, Geographic Information System (GIS) and

OMS. The JOMAR CIS can also adapt to new AMI and financial platforms if needed.

"Waterloo North Hydro's new CIS technology allows us to adapt quickly and accurately to any regulatory changes we may face," says Rene Gatien, President and CEO of Waterloo North Hydro. "The JOMAR CIS positions us as an industry leader while providing tremendous value to our customers and staff."

WNH continued to develop the JOMAR CIS with extensive cross-departmental testing by staff in customer service, operations, engineering, and finance. "Waterloo North Hydro was a tremendous collaborative partner throughout the design and implementation process," says John Blasman, President of JOMAR Softcorp International. "The integrated approach to development, design and testing allowed for the streamlining of business processes and helped identify any potential errors well before the go-live date."

## PROVIDING VALUE THROUGH INNOVATION

WNH completed the transition in early 2017. The cutover was successful with an account error rate of less than 0.3 per cent. In many cases,

the JOMAR CIS helped identify existing errors in data, allowing WNH to make the necessary corrections before there was an impact on customers.

Customer service representatives (CSRs) say there are many benefits to the new system. For example:

- CSRs no longer need to toggle through several screens to find relevant customer information, as one screen displays all key data. This shortens customer interactions for standard requests.
- The JOMAR CIS also allows CSRs to transfer data from one account to another more accurately. WNH has a high population of students in its service territory and processes large volumes of new accounts and moves. The CIS helps validate customer information over multiple accounts, proactively finding potential errors and reducing the number of interactions required to complete moves and customer payments.
- Ease of use of the JOMAR CIS and integration with other systems has decreased the number of reports staff are required to run.
- System automation has increased the accuracy and speed of calculations for microFIT and Net Metering accounts.

The system's technology also positions WNH well for any future influx of virtual net metering or other new types of customer accounts.

## POSITIONING FOR THE FUTURE

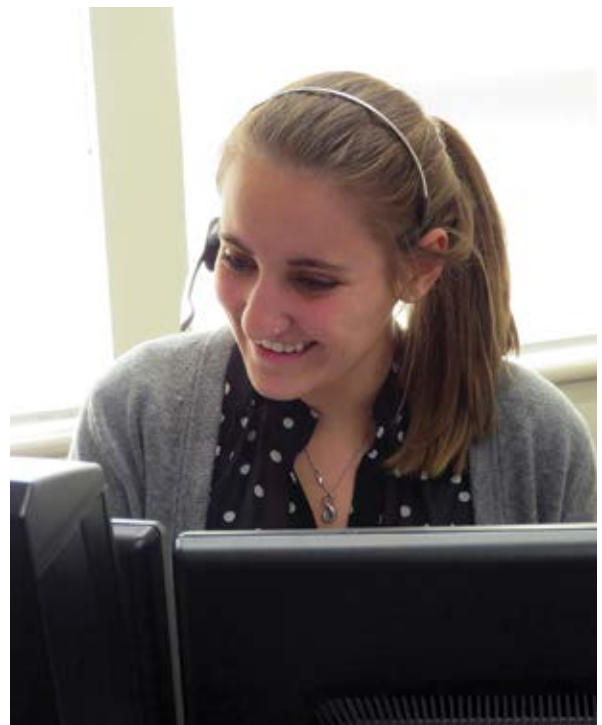
The JOMAR CIS adaptability allowed WNH to redesign its bill ahead of its move to monthly billing in early 2017, and positions the utility well for a redesign of the bill in the first quarter of 2018. The ease of configurability of the system also allowed WNH to complete the necessary calculations and additions to the bill required to implement Fair Hydro Plan messaging quickly and effectively.

WNH has delivered on its goal to implement a CIS with the technology necessary to meet the future demands of the industry, while also providing value to its customers without an increase in rates or large ongoing operational costs.

### ABOUT WATERLOO NORTH HYDRO

*Waterloo North Hydro Inc. is regulated and licensed by the Ontario Energy Board to provide all regulated electricity distribution services to over 55,700 business and residential customers in the City of Waterloo and the Townships of Wellesley and Woolwich.*

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*Waterloo North Hydro’s JOMAR CIS has decreased the time spent on the phone with customers thanks to its intuitive screen design.*