
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer Affairs Unit

Quarterly Performance Report January – March 2015

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OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION

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Consumer Affairs Unit Quarterly Performance Report

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Table of Contents

The Role and Objectives of the OUR.....	3
The Consumer and Public Affairs Department (CPA)	3
List of Acronyms	5
Executive Summary.....	6
Quarterly Report Details	7
Distribution of Contacts	7
Utilities Responsiveness.....	7
Acknowledgements	7
Responses to Case Letters	7
Main Customer Concerns.....	8
Billing	8
Service Interruption	9
Disconnection	9
Equipment & Property Damage	9
Guaranteed Standards	9
Mode of Contact	10
Geographical Distribution of Contacts.....	111
Closures of Appeals	12
Outstanding Appeals.....	12
Credits/Compensation	13
Tables	14
Table 1: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities) July - September 2014	14
Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities	144
Table 3: Distribution of Closed Appeals by Utilities	15
Table 4: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)	15
6Appendix	17

The Role and Objectives of the OUR

The Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (**OUR**) as a body corporate. Under the Act, the OUR is charged with the responsibility of regulating the provision of utility services in the following sectors:

- Electricity
- Telecommunications
- Water & Sewerage

Objectives

- To ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at reasonable cost;
- To establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers;
- To promote the long-term efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy;
- To provide an avenue of appeal for consumers who have grievances with the utility service providers;
- To work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment; and,
- To act independently and impartially.

The Consumer and Public Affairs Department (CPA)

The CPA department is comprised of the Consumer Affairs Unit, the Public Affairs Unit and the OUR's Information Centre. This Department also supports the work of the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) which is an independent advocacy group, the operations of which are facilitated by the OUR.

OURIC...

OURIC

OURIC is the information hub of the OUR. It houses a host of information relating to the utility regulatory environment which includes OUR's publications such as Consultative Documents and Determination Notices. The OUR's obligations under the Access to Information Act are discharged through the Information Centre.

Requests for additional details or any comments regarding this document should be directed to:

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List of Acronyms

CanCara	-	CanCara Development Limited (Water & Sewerage Provider)
CPA	-	Consumer and Public Affairs Department (OUR)
CAU	-	Consumer Affairs Unit (OUR)
DEML	-	Dynamic Environmental Management Limited (Water And Sewerage Provider)
Decal	-	Decal Wireless Ltd. (Telecommunications Provider)
Digi	-	Digicel
Flow	-	Columbus Communications Jamaica Ltd. (Telecommunication Service Provider)
JPS	-	Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (Electricity Provider)
KMR	-	Kingston Metropolitan Region (Kingston, St. Andrew & St. Catherine)
NWC	-	National Water Commission (Water & Sewerage Provider)
OUR	-	Office of Utilities Regulation
OURIC -		Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre
Office	-	The Director General and both Deputy Directors General

Executive Summary

During the first quarter of 2015 there were four hundred and ten (410) contacts coming in to the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU). This represents a forty-six percent (46%) decrease compared to the previous quarter and a twenty-four percent (24%) decline when compared to the first quarter of 2014. In December 2014 LIME announced that it would charge for distributing paper bills and this caused a spike in customer contacts. However, LIME's decision to delay the charges resulted in a notable reduction in contacts over the preceding period.

While there was an overall decrease in the total number of contacts to the CAU, billing-related matters showed an eight percentage increase over the previous period. The NWC accounted for the majority of the contacts in this category at 47% while JPS accounted for the second highest number of total billing related issues with 42%. The remaining 11% was divided among the three major telecommunications providers and small water provider DEML.

Telecommunications Issues

During the review period, contacts were received from Digicel customers regarding the company's decision to implement a call validation process as part its overall approach to identify and prevent calls from bypassing its network. Customers complained about the inconvenience of not being allowed to send or receive calls for days, should their attempts to validate their numbers fail. While the specific instances were referred to the company for action, the issue was discussed at a meeting with the company's representative and the OUR. The representative advised that while a 24 hour period is the stated reactivation time, actual reactivation is completed within 6 – 8 hours. Those that were not completed within that timeline would have been because of special circumstances. The OUR agreed to continue to notify the company about any complaints regarding excessive hours of no service.

The CAU secured credits of \$2,147,343.68 for utility customers as a result of its investigation of customer's appeals.

Quarterly Report Details

Distribution of Contacts

The distribution of contacts received specific to each service provider is as follows:

- Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) – thirty-seven percent (37%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – thirty-five percent (35%)
- LIME – eighteen percent (18%)
- Digicel – seven percent (7%)
- FLOW, small water provider Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML) and OUR/Other (Not Utility Provider Related – three percent (3%).

Utilities Responsiveness

Acknowledgements

Of the 47 new appeals received during the reporting period, 46 requests for information, that is, case letters were sent to the respective service providers. Fourteen (14) case letters were sent to JPS of which seven (or 50%) acknowledgments were received. Only thirty-six percent (36%) of those acknowledged were within the established timeline. Thirty-one (31) case letters were sent to the NWC of which 28 (or 90%) were acknowledged, 77% within the agreed timeline. One case letter was sent to telecommunications provider LIME.

Response to Case Letters

JPS provided responses to ten (10) of the fourteen case letters that were sent with 100% being within the agreed timeline of 25 business days. Requests for further information/clarification were however required for 50% of the responses received. LIME provided the information requested for the one case letter.

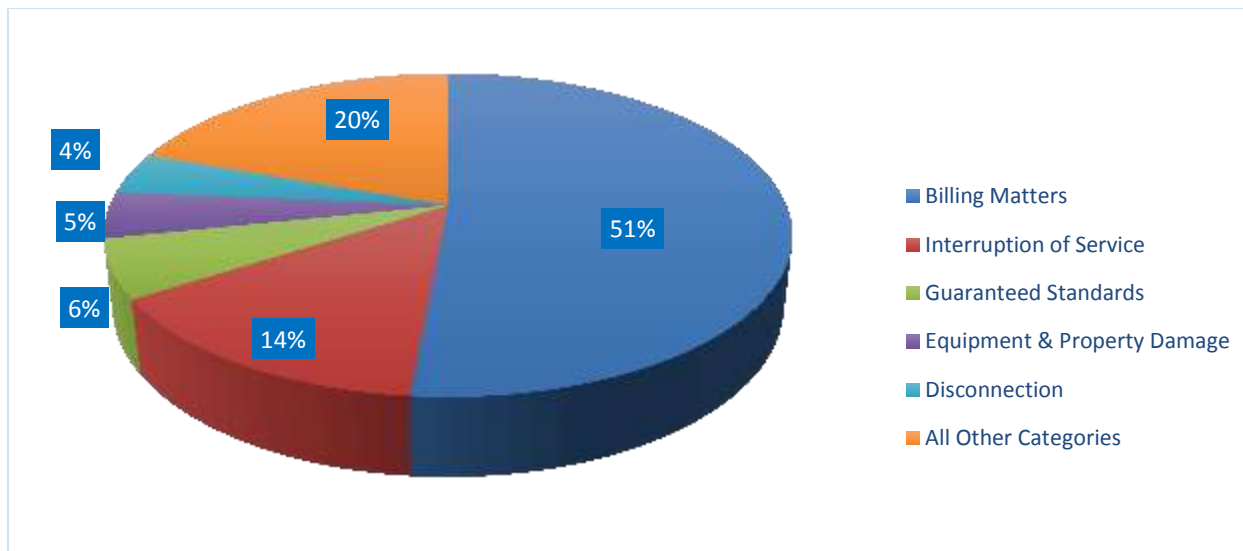
However, for the NWC, no response was received for the 31 case letters sent during the period, in spite of the provisions of the Service Level Agreement that was signed by the NWC in June 2014 as well as the reminders sent. Accordingly, this issue was again highlighted at the Unit's Quarterly meeting with the Commission's senior managers in April. An apology was offered for

the delayed responses and a commitment given that all outstanding responses would be provided by the end of May.

Main Customer Concerns

Figure 1 shows that the main reasons for utility customers contacting the CAU related to matters of: Billing, Service Interruption, Guaranteed Standards, Disconnection and Equipment Damage.

Figure 1: Main Customer Concerns



Billing

Billing related matters including adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, retroactive billing, disputed charges and estimated billing are still the main cause for contacts to the unit. They represent fifty-one percent (51%) of total contacts, and an eight (8) percent increase in similar contacts when compared with the previous reporting period.

For JPS and NWC, contacts relating to billing for each provider represented fifty-nine (59%) and seventy percent (70%) respectively.

For customers of the telecommunications providers, billing related matters represented twenty-one percent (21%), nine percent (9%) and twenty percent (20%) for Digicel, LIME and FLOW respectively.

Service Interruption

Contacts relating to interruption of service increased by two percentage points to 14% from the 12% received in the preceding quarter. Telecommunications provider LIME continued to account for the greatest share of service interruption related contacts at 9%, which is a three percentage point increase over the previous period. JPS, NWC, and the other telecommunications providers each had a share of 2% or less of the remainder of the service interruption contacts.

Disconnection

Disconnections accounted for four percent (4%) of total contacts received which is a one percent reduction over the previous period. Contacts from JPS and NWC each accounted for two percent (2%) of the disconnection related issues.

Equipment & Property Damage

Equipment and property damage account for five percent (5%) of total contacts received. These contacts also represented thirteen percent (13%) of contacts specific to the services provided by JPS.

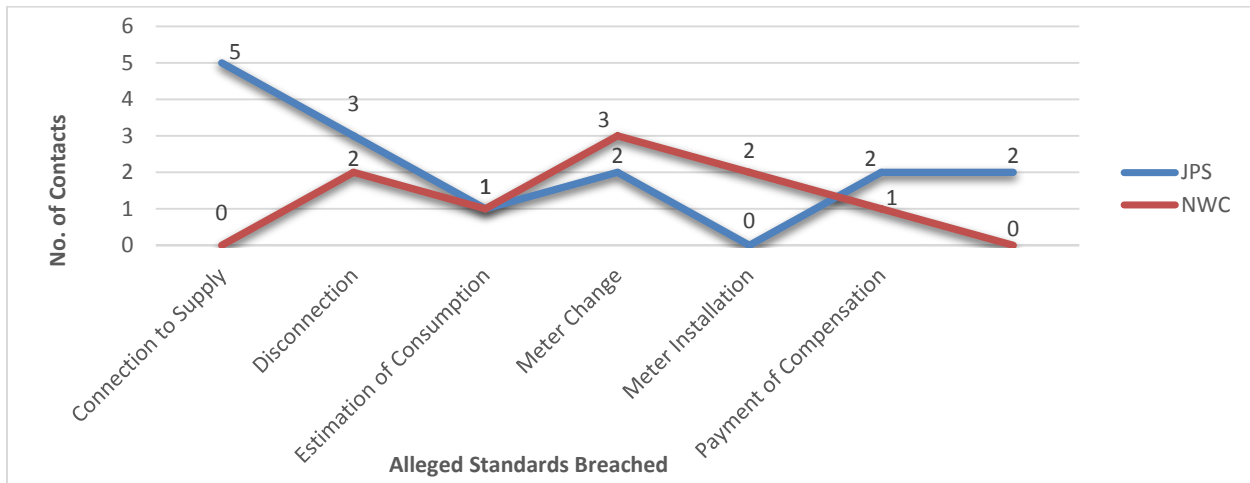
Guaranteed Standards

There were twenty four (24) contacts made to the CAU in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards by the JPS and the NWC. This represents six percent (6%) of total contacts received during the review period. JPS accounted for 4% of the contacts while the remaining 2% was for the NWC.

Figure 2 shows that the highest number of contacts in relation to perceived Guaranteed Standards breaches for JPS related to *Connection to Supply*. The other alleged breach most complained about related to *Disconnection*.

In the case of the NWC, the greatest number of contacts in relation to alleged breaches related to *Meter Change* and *Disconnection*.

Figure 2: Guaranteed Standards Contact



Utility's Performance on Guaranteed Standards

The NWC's report regarding its performance under the Guaranteed Standards scheme during the review period shows that 849 breaches, with a potential pay-out of approximately \$2.7 million, were committed. Actual payments in relation to these breaches amounted to \$827,228.22, representing 31% of total potential payments. Additionally, of the total pay-outs, 96% was by way of automatic compensation.

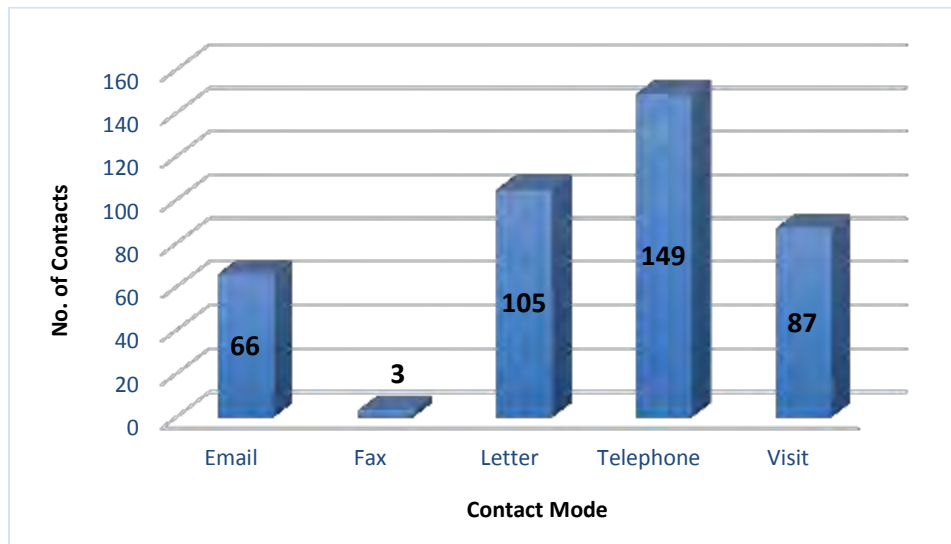
The standard recording the highest number of breaches was WGS 4(b) which relates to the NWC's delay in completing investigation or updating customers within 30 working days after receipt of their complaints. This standard accounted for 61% of total breaches.

In relation to the JPS, the company's ability to track and report on its compliance with the standards continues to be hampered by the process to upgrade its Customer Information System. By way of letter dated April 2, 2015, JPS responded to our request for an update on this matter and advised that the company will resume submission of the Guaranteed Standards report as of July 2015. JPS further advised that the July report will include information on the company's performance for the periods: January to March and April to June 2015.

Mode of Contact

The telephone continues to be the method most frequently used by consumers to make contact with the CAU and represented thirty-six (36%) of the total contacts received. Letters and visits accounted for twenty-six percent (26%) and twenty-one percent (21%) respectively. Email accounted for sixteen percent (16%) of contact mode while the remaining 1% of contacts was received via fax. Details are shown in **Figure 3**.

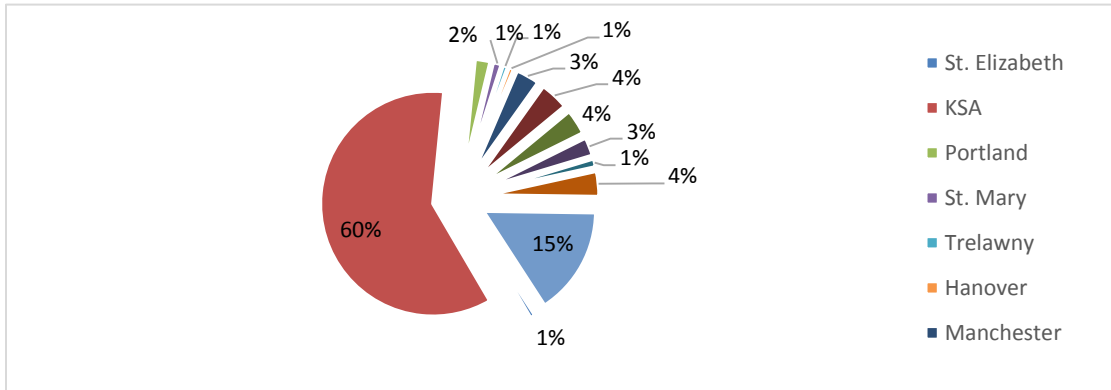
Figure 3: Method of Contact



Geographical Distribution of Contacts

The Kingston Metropolitan Region continued to account for the highest number of total contacts at sixty percent (60%). St. Ann, St. James and Clarendon each accounted for 4% of total contacts while St. Thomas and Manchester accounted for three percent (3%) of total contacts. The remaining parishes each had a share of two percent (2%) or less while fifteen percent (15%) of the contacts received provided no information on their location/parish or the information was not recorded.

Figure 4: Geographic Distribution of Contacts



Closures of Appeals¹

Forty-eight (48) appeals were closed during the review period. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of those resolved were in favour of the service provider while twenty-five percent (25%) were in favour of the customer. The remaining seventeen percent (17%) of closed appeals included those that were either outside of the OUR's jurisdiction or were resolved by way of a mutual agreement or compromise.

Of the 48 closed appeals, eighty-five percent (85%) were carried forward from previous periods while the remaining fifteen percent (15%) represent appeals that were received and resolved within the established 65 working days period.

Outstanding Appeals²

At the end of the reporting period, one hundred and six (106) appeals remain outstanding, meaning they have exceeded the established 65 working days for resolution. Of these outstanding appeals, fifty-four percent (54%) and forty-four percent (44%) represent billing complaints from JPS and NWC customers, respectively. One billing related matter each remains outstanding for LIME and small water provider St. Jago Developers Ltd.

¹ Breakdown of Appeals Closures can be seen in Table 3

² Breakdown of Outstanding Appeals can be seen in Table 4

Credits/Compensation

For the review period, an amount of \$2,147,343.68 was secured for utility customers as a result of our investigation into their appeals. Compensation to accounts of JPS customers accounted for ninety-eight (98%) of the amounts paid while NWC and LIME equally shared the remaining 2% of credits.

Tables

Table 1: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities) July - September 2014

	Description	JPS	NWC	LIME Landline	LIME Mobile	LIME Internet	Digicel	Small Water Provider	FLOW	OUR/Other (Not Utility Provider)	Total
A	Contacts for the Quarter										
(i)	New Appeals	15	31	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	47
(ii)	New Appeals - Pending Information	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
(iii)	New Complaints	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	8
(iv)	New Enquires	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	9
(v)	New Opinions	4	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	8
(vi)	New Referrals	125	101	51	12	9	26	1	8	2	335
	Total Contacts	150	142	53	13	9	28	1	11	3	410
B	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:										
(i)	Addressed	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
(ii)	Mutually Resolved/Compromise	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
(iii)	Outside of Jurisdiction	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
(iv)	Resolved in Favour of Customer	11	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
(v)	Resolved in Favour of Utility	22	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
	Total Closures	38	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48
C	Total Appeals from Previous Periods:										
	Outstanding Appeals with OUR										
(i)	Awaiting Final Letters to Customers	32	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	41
(ii)	Undergoing Analysis/Determination	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
	Total Outstanding Appeals with the OU	40	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53
(iii)	Outstanding Appeals with Utility (Awaiting Responses)	17	34	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	53
	Total Outstanding Appeals	57	47	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	106

Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Providers							OUR/Other (not utility related)	Total
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow	LIME	DEML			
Billing Matters	88	100	6	1	15	1	0	211	
Customer Service	0	0	5	2	5	0	0	12	
Disconnection	9	7	0	0	1	0	0	17	
Equipment Damage	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	
Guaranteed Standards	15	9	0	0	0	0	0	24	
Health & Safety	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Illegal Connection	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Interruption of Service	2	6	5	8	38	0	0	59	
Irregular Supply	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Metering	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	6	
Other	5	8	10	0	7	0	3	33	
Poor Service Quality	1	0	1	0	8	0	0	10	
Property Damage	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	
RAMI System (Service Connection)	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Reconnection	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	
Service Connection	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	4	
Total	150	142	28	11	75	1	3	410	

Table 3: Distribution of Closed Appeals by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Provider		Totals
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	27	10	37
Equipment Damage	10	0	10
Property Damage	1	0	1
Total	38	10	48

Table 4: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Distribution of Appeals Outstanding					
Complaint Category	Service Providers				Total
	JPS	NWC	Flow	St. Jago Developers	
Billing Matters	36	41	0	1	78
Disconnection	0	1	1	0	2
Equipment Damage	18	0	0	0	18
Metering	0	2	0	0	2
Other	0	2	0	0	2
Property Damage	3	1	0	0	4
Total	57	47	1	1	106

CAU's Performance on Service Standards (Appeals)

Activity	Service Standards	% Compliance	Comment
Acknowledgement of Appeals	Within 2 business days of receipt of customer's correspondence	100%	Total New Appeals - 48
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within 5 business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	74%	Total Case Letter sent to utility - 47
Correspondence Copied to Customer	Customer is to be copied on all correspondence submitted to the utilities pertaining to their complaint	100%	
Final Response	Within 18 business days of receipt of all necessary information from relevant parties; where no further information requests was needed	60%	Of the 11 Provider Responses received, only 5 required no follow-up action with the utility.

Appendix

DEFINITION OF TERMS USED IN DOCUMENTING CUSTOMER CONTACTS

Appeal:	Any contact in which the utility company has completed an investigation into a customer's complaint, the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome and writes to the OUR asking for an independent investigation of the matter.
Complaint:	Any contact expressing dissatisfaction with the handling of a complaint by the utility company and to which the OUR takes steps to resolve without conducting a formal investigation.
Customer Contact:	Any contact made to the OUR to register an appeal, inquiry, opinion, etc. Contact can be made through the telephone, post, electronic channels (emails, website, and Facebook page) and visits.
Enquiry:	Any contact requiring verification/confirmation of information relating to the OUR, a utility service, policy and/or practice, etc.
Opinion:	Any contact expressing a view about the actions, practice or terms of service, etc. of a utility company or the OUR.
Referral:	Any contact advised by the OUR to consult the relevant utility company because the complainant had not initially utilized or exhausted the complaint procedure within the relevant utility company.