
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer Affairs Unit
Quarterly Performance Report

Quarterly Performance Report October - December 2013

Publication Date: February 27, 2014



36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10

October to December 2013

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The Role of the OUR

The Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (**the Office/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
- Public Transportation by road, rail and ferry

The OUR's 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 of the OUR 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.

The Consumer Affairs Unit

The Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) acts as the main interface between the OUR and the public on a daily basis. The unit is responsible for the provision of policy recommendations

to the Office on consumer related issues. The unit develops, monitors and modifies the Guaranteed Standards developed for the National Water Commission and the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited. It also has direct responsibility for the hearing, investigation and resolution of consumer appeals against utility companies.

The Public Affairs Unit

The Public Affairs Unit has primary responsibility for keeping the public informed about the role and functions of the OUR as well as to engender and maintain a positive corporate image. The Unit is also responsible for: managing media relations; managing the content on the OUR's website; the preparation of advertisements, press releases and public notices; and the production of the ***Inside the OUR*** radio and print features.

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

Can Cara	-	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.
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

Executive Summary

During the period October to December 2013, the Office of Utilities Regulation's (OUR) Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) fielded five hundred and sixty-five (565) contacts¹. This represents a thirty-two percent (32%) reduction in the number of those received over the previous quarter, July to September 2013.

Distribution of 565 Contacts Received

The breakdown is as follows:

- Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) – forty-five percent (45%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – thirty-six percent (36%)
- Digicel – five per cent (5%)
- LIME – twelve per cent (12%)
- FLOW, small telecommunications provider Decal Wireless and the small water provider Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML). – two percent (2%)

For the first time the unit received an appeal in relation to services provided by small telecommunications provider **Decal Wireless**.

The number of contacts in relation to JPS and the NWC declined by forty-two percent (42%) and fourteen percent (14%) respectively. Contacts in relation to telecommunications providers Digicel and LIME also decreased over the period by forty-nine percent (49%) and eleven percent (11%) respectively. Similarly, contacts in relation to small water providers declined by forty percent (40%) when compared to the previous period.

Utilities Responsiveness

Acknowledgements

Of the thirty-seven (37) new appeals accepted, contact was made with the utility company by way of case letters, emails or telephone calls. A total of twenty (20) case letters and emails were submitted to the utilities during the quarter. Of these, eight (8) were submitted to JPS, eleven (11) to the NWC and one (1) to Digicel. Fifty percent (50%) of the

¹ See full breakdown in Table 1 under 'Figures and Tables'.

submissions to JPS were acknowledged by the company while NWC did not acknowledge any of the correspondence from the OUR.

Responses to Case Letters

The CAU received twenty seven (27) responses from the utilities to case letters or emails that were submitted prior to, and during the quarter. Of these responses, eleven (11) were received from JPS, fourteen (14) from NWC, and one (1) each from Digicel and Flow. Ninety-one percent (91%) of the responses from JPS were received within the OUR established thirty (30) day standard, while fourteen percent (14%) of NWC's responses were within this standard. Digicel and Flow also responded within the 30 day period.

Main Concerns²

Guaranteed Standards

The number of contacts received by the OUR in relation to breaches of the Guaranteed Standards amounted to twenty-three (23) for the JPS and thirty-three (33) for the NWC. For JPS, contacts in relation to perceived Guaranteed Standards breaches related to estimated billing and connection to supply accounted for forty-three percent (43%) and thirty percent (30%) respectively. The remaining twenty-seven percent (27%) of JPS Guaranteed Standards contacts were in relation to reconnection of overdue payment, response to emergency and wrongful disconnection.

In the case of the NWC, estimated billing and meter installation received the highest number of contacts at sixty-four percent (64%) and eighteen percent (18%) respectively. The remaining 18% of contacts of this nature related to account status, connection to supply and reconnection after overdue payments.

The report received from JPS regarding its performance under the Guaranteed Standards scheme for the reporting period indicated that a total of 8,601 breaches were committed. The company's reported compensatory pay-outs relating to these breaches was approximately \$480,000 out of a potential compensatory pay-out of approximately \$32

² See Table 2 for more detailed breakdown.

million. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the total pay-out was by way of automatic compensation.

The report from the NWC for the July – September quarter was not received at the time of preparing this document. However, the report for the preceding July to September quarter indicates that the Commission committed 1,665 breaches of the Guaranteed Standards which has a potential pay-out of approximately \$4 million. Actual pay-out for the period amounted to approximately \$69,000 (representing 2% of the potential payment) which was also as a result of the compensation being automatically applied to the customers' account.

Billing

Billing related matters continued to be the chief cause for contacts to the unit representing forty-nine percent (49%) of the contacts received. Total billing related contacts to the CAU amounted to two hundred and seventy-seven (277).

Fifty-five percent (55%) and fifty-eight percent (58%) of the total contacts received from JPS and NWC customers respectively during the review period, related to billing matters. These included adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, retroactive billings, disputed charges and estimated billing. In relation to the telecommunications providers - Digicel, Flow and LIME - billing related contacts were twenty-seven percent (27%), twenty-five percent (25%) and twenty-five percent (25%) respectively.

Service Interruption

Complaints relating to interruption of service represented twelve percent (12%) of total contacts received. Of this, JPS accounted for four percent (4%); NWC, three percent (3%); Telecommunications provider LIME, four percent (4%), while the remaining one percent (1%) is shared among the other telecommunications providers Digicel and Flow and small water provider, DEML.

Equipment & Property Damage

Issues relating to equipment and property damage accounted for five percent (5%) of total contacts. These contacts also represented eleven percent (11%) of contacts specific to the services provided by JPS.

Disconnection

Disconnections accounted for five percent (5%) of total contacts received. JPS, at forty-two percent (42%) and NWC, at thirty-one percent (31%) accounted for most of the contacts in relation to disconnection. LIME and DEML accounted for nineteen percent (19%) and eight percent (8%) of disconnection contacts, respectively.

Service Connection

This category represented four percent (4%) of contacts to the CAU. The service provider receiving the highest number of complaints was JPS at sixty-two percent (62%). NWC and FLOW each accounted for fourteen percent (14%) of contacts relating to service connection while Digicel and LIME each accounted for five percent (5%).

Mode of Contact

Telephone was the method most frequently used by consumers to make contact with the OUR. Of the five hundred and sixty-five (565) contacts received, two hundred and ninety-one percent (291), representing fifty-two (52%) were received by telephone. Emails, letters and visits account for fifteen percent (15%), eleven percent (11%) and twenty percent (20%) respectively. The remaining two percent (2%) of contacts were received through fax and social media channels.

Geographical Distribution of Contacts

During the review period, the Kingston Metropolitan Region continued to account for the highest number of total contacts at seventy-four percent (74%). St. James accounted for six percent (6%) while Clarendon and Manchester each accounted for three percent (3%) of total contacts. The remaining parishes each had a share of two percent (2%) or less.

Closures of Appeals

A total of thirty-one (31) appeals were resolved and closed during the review period. Of this number, eighteen (18) were carried forward from previous periods while thirteen (13) represented new appeals received during the period. The 13 appeals that were received and closed during the period represent 35% of the total new appeals received.

Outstanding Appeals

One hundred and fifty (150) appeals remain outstanding at the end of the quarter. Twenty-four (24), or sixteen percent (16%) of them, were received during the review period. The remaining one hundred and twenty-six (126), or eighty-four percent (84), were carried forward from previous periods.

Of the 150 appeals that remain outstanding, forty-six percent (46%) and twenty-six percent (26%) represent billing complaints from JPS and NWC customers, respectively. Matters relating to damage to JPS customers' equipment and property, represent thirteen (13%) of the open appeals; while the remaining fifteen percent (15%) account for all other appeal categories.

Credits/Compensation

Resulting from our investigation of customers' appeals, the CAU secured a total amount of \$1,212,661.91 for utility customers. Of this amount, ninety-six percent (96%) and three percent (3%) were applied as credits or other compensation to JPS and NWC customers, respectively. The remaining one percent (1%) was secured for a LIME customer.

Operational and Other Matters

In our effort to ensure that utility customers enjoy an acceptable level of service, the CAU continued its collaboration with JPS and NWC. One of the main initiatives during the period was to commence the development of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with both the major electricity and water and sewerage providers, since most of the contacts are in relation to these providers. The SLA is a formal agreement between the service providers and the customers in the context of service provisioning. It plays significant role in

ensuring trustworthiness among stakeholders. The agreement mostly covers the quality aspect of services like performance, availability and responsibility. The SLA aims to:

1. Articulate the expectations of the parties to the agreement;
2. Provide a mechanism for issue resolution; and
3. Act as a scorecard against which to examine performance and results.

The agreements are expected to enhance governance, accountability, and service quality by clearly defining roles, responsibilities, processes, and performance expectations.

Additionally, in order to obtain first-hand experience of the customer service practices at the JPS and NWC offices, a mystery shopping exercise was conducted in the Montego-Bay offices of these providers in October 2013. During the visits, the following were observed:

NWC

The visit to the NWC customer service office indicated that while the area is extremely small and could only accommodate very few customers at a time, the customer service representatives were professional, courteous to customers and respectfully handled customers' issues during the interview process. Additionally, information on the guaranteed service standards was mounted and visible. Special accommodations were made for customers conducting short transactions, such as paying bills only.

JPS

The JPS customer service representatives also acted in a professional manner to customers. It was however, noted that no information was visible on the guaranteed service standards inside its Montego Bay location. This was pointed out to the company's senior executive present for action. They were also advised that the OUR's mystery shopping activities will be increased in the coming months.

To assess our own customer satisfaction level, a questionnaire known as the *Customer Feedback Form* was developed and implemented in November 2013. Since implementation, thirty-four (34) or fifty-two percent (52%) of the sixty-six (66) customers who visit the CAU used the form to provide feedback on their experience with the unit. A version of the form will also be made available, by April 1, 2014, on the OUR's electronic channels to allow

other customers the opportunity to provide feedback. The information from the form is reviewed monthly and is used to help determine areas for improvement, which includes the customer service environment and the quality of the customer service being provided. For example, the form asks the customer to rate how quickly the unit was able to identify his/her problem and provide the appropriate advice.

OUR Provides Oversight to Changes in Hope Pastures Distribution

In an effort to assist in resolving the differences between the Hope Pastures Citizen's Association (HPCA) and the JPS, the OUR convened and facilitated several meetings between the parties in December 2013. The representatives of the HPCA expressed dissatisfaction with the exchange of information between them and the JPS regarding the project to replace the current underground distribution system with an overhead system. It was agreed at the meeting that JPS would provide details on the current status of the project, and outline the way forward for submission to all parties by January 13, 2014. The OUR has committed to providing oversight until the project is completed.

Figures and Tables

Table 1: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities) October – December 2013

	Description	JPS	NWC	LIME Landline	LIME Mobile	LIME Internet	DIGI	Small Telecoms Provider	Small Water Providers	FLOW	Other/ Not Utility Provider Related	TOTAL
A	Contacts for the Quarter:											
(i)	New Appeals	16	18	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	37
(ii)	New Appeals – Pending Information	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
(iv)	New Enquires	34	18	3	1	0	2	0	0	1	9	68
(v)	New Opinions	14	3	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	22
(vi)	New Referrals	191	150	27	21	11	20	0	3	9	4	436
	Total Contacts	256	189	31	22	12	26	1	3	12	13	565
B	Total Appeals from Previous Periods	98	44	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	
C	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:											
(i)	Mutually Resolved/Compromise	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
(ii)	Withdrawn by the Customer	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
(iii)	Insufficient Information	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(iv)	Outside of Jurisdiction	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(v)	Resolved in favour of Customer	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	13
(vi)	Resolved in Favour of Utility	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
	Total Closures	15	15	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31
C	Outstanding Appeals with the OUR:											
(i)	To be submitted to Utilities	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
(ii)	Awaiting Final Letters to Customers	12	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	20
(iii)	Awaiting Additional Information from Customer	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
(iv)	Undergoing Analysis/Determination	39	16	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	56
	Total Outstanding Appeals with the OUR	53	27	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	81
D	Outstanding Appeals with Utilities (Awaiting responses)	46	20	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	69
	Total Outstanding Appeals	99	47	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	150

Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Providers								Totals
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow	LIME	Decal Wireless	Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd.	Other/ Not Utility Related	
Account Status		1							1
Billing Matters	140	110	7	3	16	1			277
Broken Main		4							4
Customer Service Practice	1	2			4				7
Damaged Meter	1								1
Defective Streetlight	2								2
Disconnection	11	8			5		2		26
Estimated Billing	3								3
Equipment Damage	27								27
Health & Safety	4	1							5
Illegal Connection	3	1							4
Installation Contributions		1							1
Interruption of Service	21	16	1	2	24		1		65
Irregular Supply	2	7							9
Leak at Meter		2							2
Metering	9	9							18
Meter Installation									0
Meter Reading		4							4
Other	9	9	13	4	8			13	56
Payment Arrangement	3	7							10
Payment of Compensation		2							
Phone card			2		1				3
Poor Quality of Service	1		1		5				7
Property Damage	2								2
Response to Emergency	1								1
Reconnection	3	2	1		1				7
Service Connection	13	3	1	3	1				21
Unavailability of Service									0
Total	256	189	26	12	65	1	3	13	565

Table 3: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Distribution of Appeals by Utilities (Outstanding)						
Complaint Category	Service Providers					Totals
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow	Decal Wireless	
Billing Matters	70	39	0	1	1	111
Customer Service Practice	0	2	0	0	0	2
Damaged Meter	1	0	0	0	0	1
Disconnection	2	1	0	0	0	3
Equipment Damage	17	0	0	0	0	17
Illegal Connection	2	0	0	0	0	2
Interruption of Service	2	1	0	0	0	3
Irregular Supply	0	0	0	0	0	0
Leak at Meter		1	0	0	0	1
Metering	1	0	0	0	0	1
Meter Installation	0	1	0	0	0	1
Meter Reading	0	1	0	0	0	1
Other	0	0	1	0	0	1
Phone card	0	0	1	0	0	1
Poor Quality of Service	1	0	0	0	0	1
Property Damage	3	0	0	0	0	3
Unavailability of Service	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	99	47	2	1	1	150

Table 4: Distribution of Appeals by Utilities (Closed)

Complaint Category	Service Provider				Totals
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	LIME	
Billing Matters	10	14			24
Connection to Supply	2				2
Disconnection		1			1
Defective Street light					0
Equipment Damage	1				1
Illegal Connection	1				1
Interruption of Service				1	1
Wrongful Disconnection	1				1
Total	15	15	0	1	31

Table 5: Predominant Customer Complaints

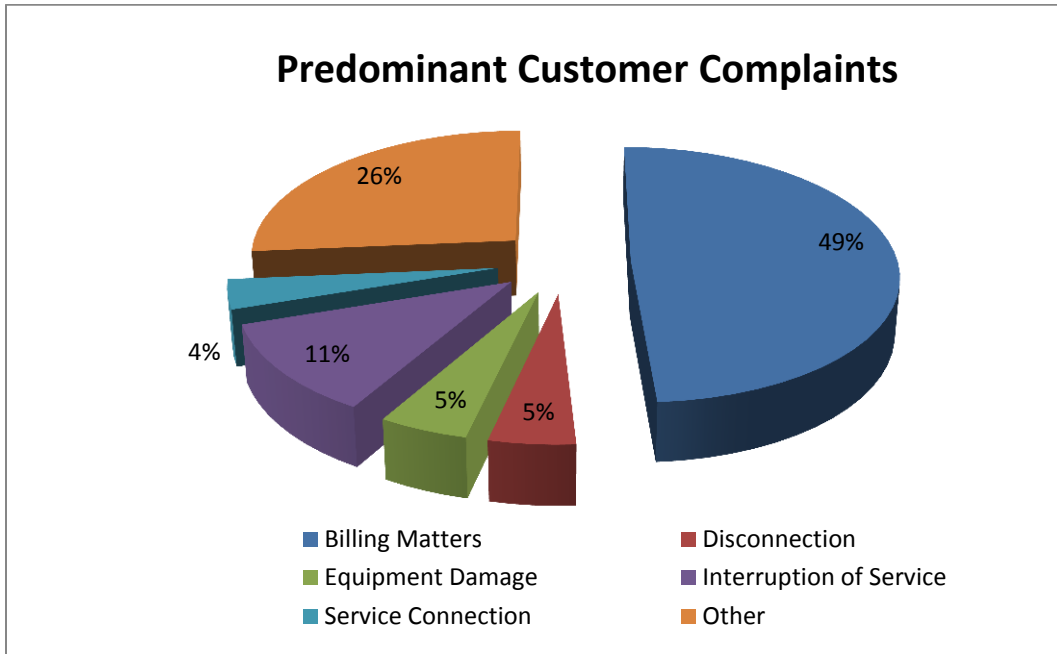


Table 6: Contact Method

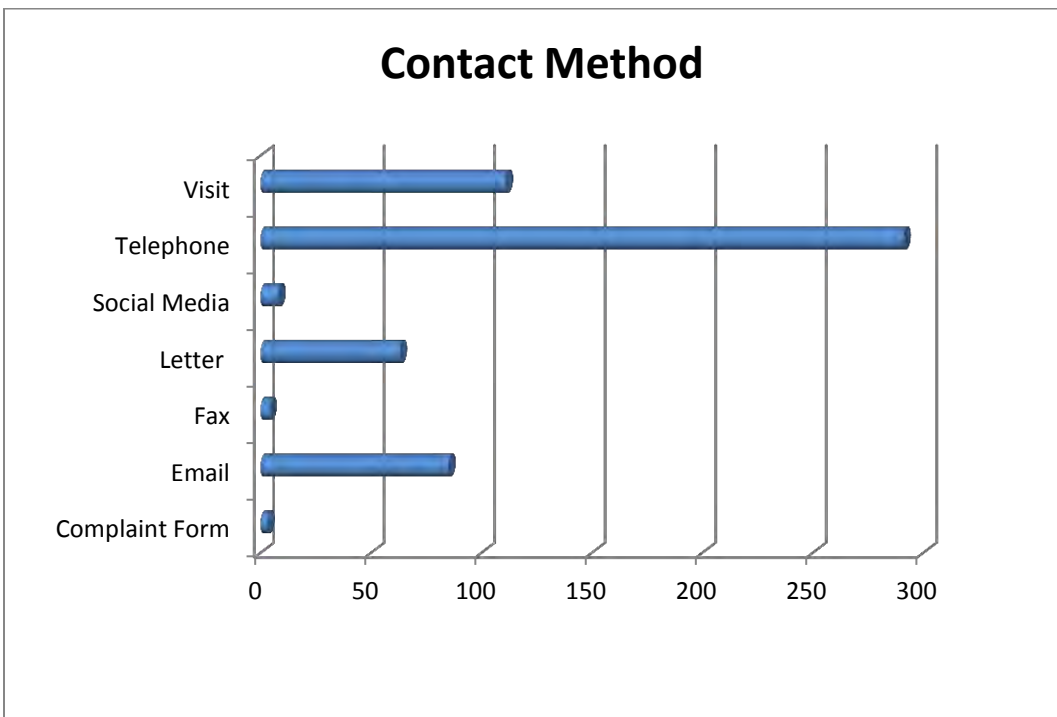


Table 7: Contacts By Parish

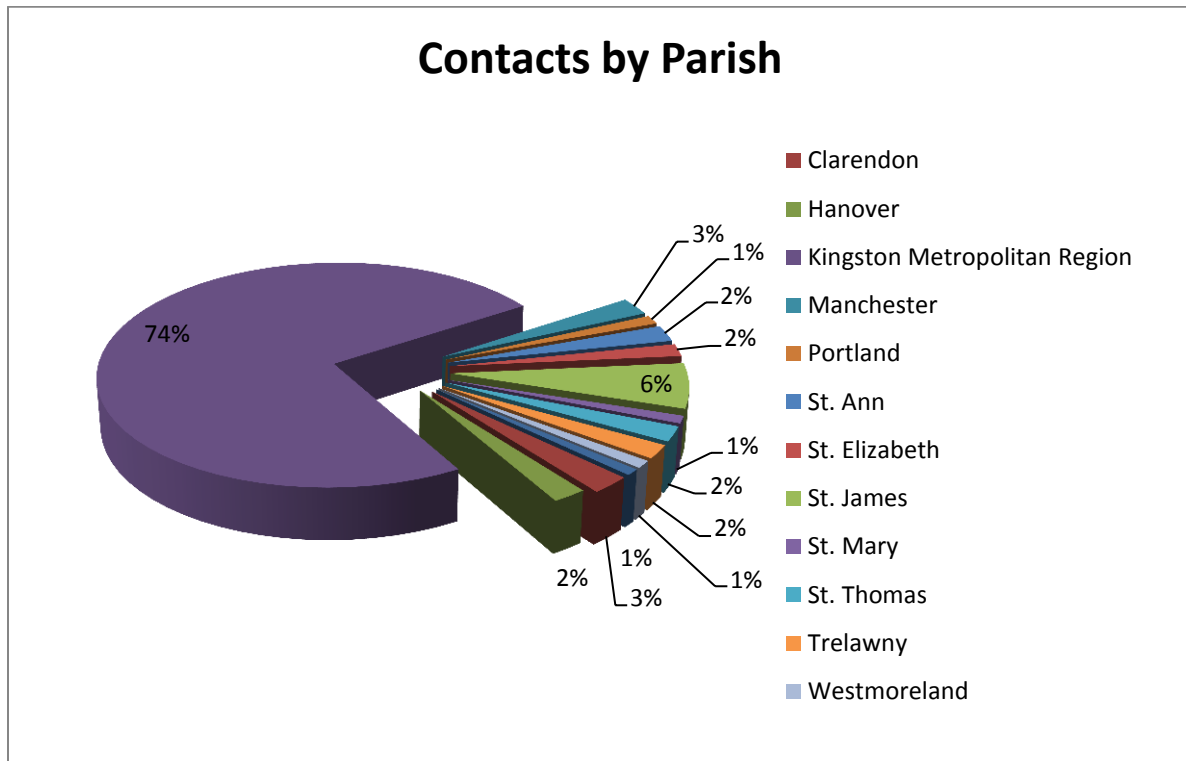


Table 8: Guaranteed Standards Contacts



Table 9: 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	95%	Total New Appeals 37
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within 5 business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	65%	Total requiring Case Letter/ Other Contact with utility 37
Correspondence Copied to Customer	Customer is to be copied on all correspondence submitted to the utilities pertaining to their complaint	100%	
Final Response	Within 5 business days of receipt of all necessary information from relevant parties	77%	Total responses received from utilities 23

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.