



# OUR

Office of Utilities Regulation  
Regulating Utilities For The Benefit Of All

## CONSUMER QUARTERLY REPORT

JANUARY-MARCH 2016



### Billing complaints spike in first Quarter

There was a five percentage point increase in contacts received by the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) about matters related to billing over the January to March 2016 quarter. Overall the CAU received 699 new contacts during the quarter, representing a 17% decline in the number of contacts received when compared with the preceding quarter. The data indicate a general decline in contacts for all major areas of concern with the largest decline (of 27%) being for the issue of interruption of service.

Billing matters showed a general increase and at 49% remained the main reason for customer contact to the Unit. The billing issues complained about included adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, disputed charges and estimated billing.

There were 346 billing related contacts of which JPS and NWC accounted for 129 (or 37%) and 149 (43%) respectively. Digicel accounted for 6 (or 2%) while C&WJ (FLOW) and Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for 36 (or 10%) and 18 or (5%) respectively. Small water providers and contacts that were not utility related accounted for the remaining 8 (or 2%).

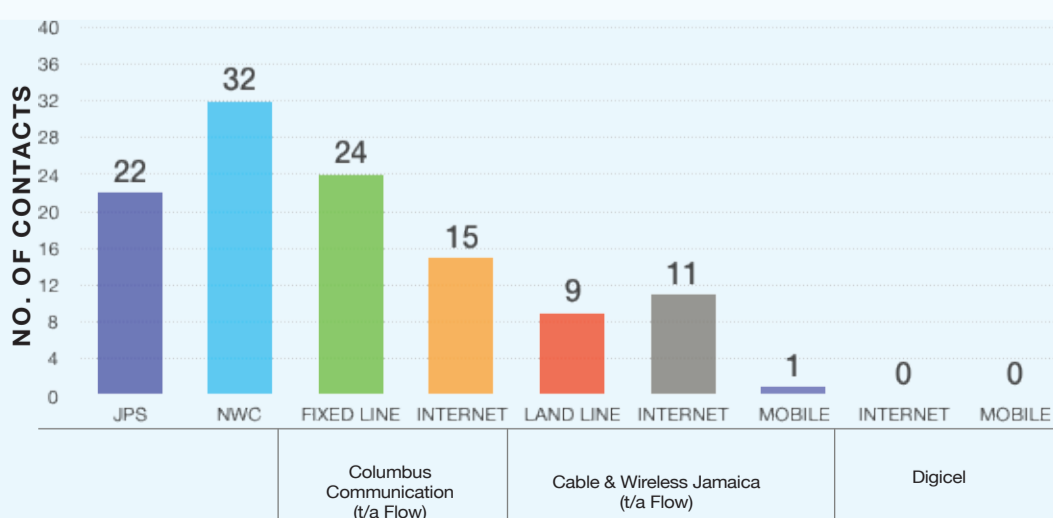
Service interruption contacts again accounted for the second highest reason for customer contacts which at 20% represented a two percentage point reduction over the preceding period.

#### Distribution of Contacts

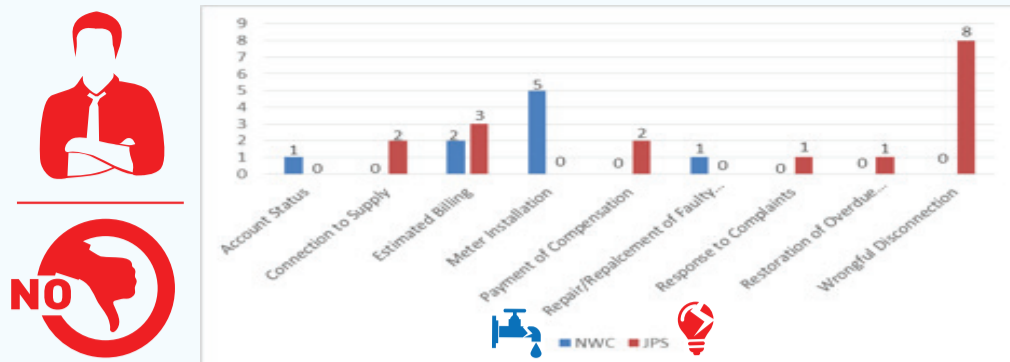
The distribution of contacts per service provider were:

- National Water Commission (NWC) 218 (31%)
- Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) 205 (29%)
- Cable & Wireless Jamaica Ltd. (FLOW) 142 (20%)
- Columbus Communications (FLOW) 80 (11%)
- Digicel 25 (4%)
- Small water providers CanCara Development Ltd., Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML) and the National Irrigation Commission; small telecommunications provider Dekal Wireless and OUR/Other (Not Utility Provider Related) – 29 (5%).

#### Distribution of billing contacts per 100,000 of customer base



#### Guaranteed Standards contacts to the OUR



#### Utilities' performance on Guaranteed Standards

The CAU fielded twenty-six (26) contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards by the JPS and the NWC. The NWC has submitted one part of the Guaranteed Standards report, which is the section that shows the number of breaches. The missing section details the sum that the Commission would have paid out in automatic compensation during the review period. No report has been received from JPS to date.

#### Our Appeals Process

The activities of utility companies are guided by "terms and conditions" within their license and/or Act. There are occasions, however, when consumers feel that particular action(s) of a utility company might have been in breach of the utility's "terms and conditions" or might have been unfair to them. In such circumstances, the OUR is an avenue for recourse in having any such wrong investigated and addressed through our appeals process.

Before submitting an appeal to the OUR, consumers are expected and encouraged to first take the complaint, or issues giving rise to the complaint, up to the level of a senior officer at the respective utility company. The hearing of grievances is a consumer's right and utilities are obliged to review such matters with the aim of having the issue addressed or clarified.

#### Closure of Appeals

Twenty-five (25) appeals were closed by the CAU during the review period. Of those closed, sixty percent (60%) were in favour of the service providers while twenty-four percent (24%) were in favour of the customer. The remaining 16% represents appeals for which a compromise was reached or those that were withdrawn by the customer.

Twenty-two (22) of the closed appeals were carried forward from previous periods while the remaining three closed appeals were received and resolved within the OUR-established standard of sixty (65) working days.

#### Distribution of Closed Appeals by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Providers		Total
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	3	18	21
Equipment Damage	1	0	1
Illegal Connection	1	0	1
Other	0	1	1
Leak at Meter	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>



1. Representatives of the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) pause for a light moment at the Electricity Codes Workshop on Thursday, 2016 June 16 at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel. The workshop was the first of two one-day intensive workshops for the preparation and promulgation of Electricity Sector Codes. From (l-r) are: Hopeton Heron, Deputy Director General; Ansdor Hewitt, Director, Regulation, Policy, Monitoring and Enforcement (RPME); Val Fagan, Senior Engineering Consultant and Project Manager; Peter Johnson, Manager, (RPME); Albert Gordon, Director General and Winston Robotham, Senior Economist.

2. Ms. Cheryl Lewis, General Legal Counsel, speaking about the Electricity Act 2015 its implications and impact.

3. Workshop participants listen keenly.

This session was to sensitize electricity sector stakeholders on the inputs required for the preparation and promulgation of electricity sector codes in Jamaica and was hosted jointly by OUR and USAID/CARCEP, the Caribbean Clean Energy Program (CARCEP), an agency of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Electricity Act, 2015, stipulates development of five (5) Codes (the Generation Code, the Transmission Code, the Distribution Code, the Supply Code and the Despatch Code), through consultation with industry stakeholders.

**CONSUMER COMPENSATION** Credits/Compensation JANUARY-MARCH 2016

**\$1,723,267.99**

Applied Credit/ JPS 41%

Applied Credit/ NWC 59%

Over the quarter \$1,723,267.99 was secured for utility customers as a result of our investigation into their appeals. JPS accounted for 41% while the NWC accounted for the remaining 59%.