
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer Affairs Unit
Quarterly Performance Report

Quarterly Performance Report July - September 2014

Publication Date: November 14, 2014



36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10

Consumer Affairs Unit Quarterly Performance Report

Document Number: 2014/GEN/005/QPR.004

Publication Date: November 14, 2014

Table of Contents

The Role of the OUR.....	3
The OUR’s Objectives.....	3
The Consumer and Public Affairs Department (CPA)	3
List of Acronyms	5
Executive Summary.....	6
Quarterly Report Details	8
Distribution of Contacts	8
Utilities Responsiveness.....	8
Acknowledgements	8
Responses to Case Letters	8
Main Customer Concerns.....	9
Billing	9
Service Interruption	10
Disconnection/Reconnection	10
Poor Quality of Service	10
Equipment Damage	10
Customer Service	10
Guaranteed Standards	10
Mode of Contact	11
Geographical Distribution of Contacts.....	12
Closures of Appeals	13
Outstanding Appeals.....	13
Credits/Compensation	13
Tables	14
Table 1: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities) July - September 2014	14
Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities	14
Table 3: Distribution of Appeals by Utilities (Closed)	15
Table 4: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)	15
CAU’s Performance on Service Standards (Appeals)	16
Appendix	17

The Role 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

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:

Collette Goode
Consumer Affairs Specialist – Policy
Email: cgoode@our.org.jm

OR

Yvonne Nicholson – Director, Consumer & Public Affairs
Office of Utilities Regulation
36 Trafalgar Road
Kingston 10
Email: ynicholson@our.org.jm • Fax: (876) 929-3635

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. (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 July to September 2014 quarter, the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) received 680 contacts. This represents the highest number of contacts received when compared with the January to March and April to June quarters by 26% and 35% respectively. This increase also follows the trend of the highest number of contacts being received in the summer months.

The increase in the number of contacts can be attributed to a 33% increase in contacts related to billing matters, a 46% increase in contacts pertained to service interruption and a 93% increase in contacts made to the OUR on poor service quality matters, when compared with the preceding quarter.

The Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) and the National Water Commission (NWC) accounted for the greatest level of increase for billing related matters when compared with the April to June quarter at 49% and 29% respectively. High consumption and disputed charges were the main billing related complaints to the CAU.

In relation to the increase in complaints about service interruption, contacts from customers of NWC and LIME saw the highest percentage increase of 86% and 81% respectively when compared with the previous quarter.

While the area of poor service quality saw the highest increase of 93% over the preceding period, it also represents the area with the lowest number of total contacts when compared with the two abovementioned areas. Telecommunications providers Digicel and LIME accounted for the greatest increase in contacts relating to service quality issues. The OUR is continuing to monitor and collaborate with the companies with a view to seeing an improvement in the quality of service issues now being experienced.

Notably, for telecommunications providers Digicel and LIME contacts relating to poor service quality and service interruption may have resulted from the companies' decision to disallow calls from VOIP provider Viber on their networks. The OUR hosted meetings with the service providers as well as with representative of special interest groups which includes the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC), the Consumer Affairs Committee on Utilities

(CACU) and small telecommunications providers. The OUR's review of this matter is currently underway.

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) – forty-two percent (42%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – twenty-nine percent (29%)
- Digicel – seven per cent (7%)
- LIME – sixteen per cent (16%)
- FLOW, small telecommunications provider Decal Wireless and the small water providers Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML), CanCara Developers and Runaway Bay Water Company – six percent (6%).

Utilities Responsiveness

Acknowledgements

Information requests were sent in the form of case letters, to the respective service providers, for the thirty-eight (38) new appeals that were accepted during the period. Eighteen (18) case letters were submitted to both the JPS and the NWC of which five and thirteen were acknowledgements (representing 28% and 72%) respectively. No acknowledgement was received for the one case letter sent to Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd (DEML).

Responses to Case Letters

JPS provided responses to nine (9) of the eighteen case letters that were sent. Of the 9 responses, seven (7) - representing 78% - were received within the agreed timeline of 25 business days.

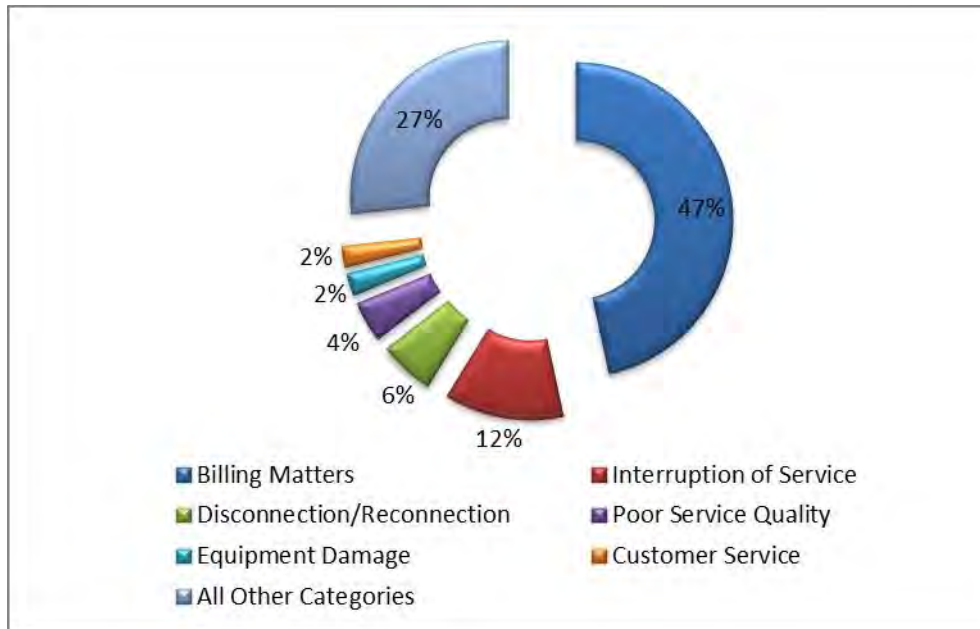
For the NWC, responses were received for four (4) - representing 22% - of the 18 case letters sent. Three of the 4 responses were received within the agreed 30 working day timeline.

No response was received from DEML regarding the one case letter sent.

Main Customer Concerns

As shown in Figure 1, the main reasons for contacts to the CAU were: Billing Matters, Service Interruption, Disconnection/Reconnection, Equipment Damage, Poor Service Quality and the service providers' Customer Service practices.

Figure 1: Main Customer Concerns



Billing

Similar to the preceding reporting period, issues relating to billing continued to be the main cause for contacts to the unit and again represented forty-seven percent (47%) of the contacts received.

For JPS and NWC, contact relating to billing represented fifty-five (55%) and sixty-five percent (65%) respectively. These billing related matters included adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, retroactive billings, disputed charges and estimated billing.

For customers of the telecommunications providers, billing related matters represented twelve percent (12%), seventeen percent (17%) and twenty-seven percent (27%) of total contacts for Digicel LIME and FLOW respectively.

Service Interruption

Compared to the previous reporting period, contacts relating to interruption of service showed a one percentage point increase to 12%. JPS and LIME accounted for the highest number of service interruption related contacts at 4% each. The NWC accounted for 2% of contacts while the remaining 2% was shared equally between Digicel and DEML.

Disconnection/Reconnection

Disconnections and reconnections accounted for six percent (6%) of total contacts received. Contacts from JPS and LIME each accounted for two percent (2%) of the disconnection/reconnection related issues. The NWC account for one percent (1%) while Digicel and FLOW shared the remaining one percent (1%) of total contacts received.

Poor Quality of Service

Four percent (4%) of total contacts received related to poor service quality from customers of the JPS, NWC, Digicel, LIME and Decal Wireless. LIME accounted for the highest number of contacts relating to poor quality of service, at 3%.

Equipment Damage

Issues relating to equipment damage accounted for two percent (2%) of total contacts. These contacts also represented six percent (6%) of contacts specific to the services provided by JPS.

Customer Service

LIME and the NWC equally shared the two percent (2%) of contacts received relating to their customer service practices. While customer service related contacts were also received from Digicel and Flow customers, these accounted for less than one percent (1%) of the total received.

Guaranteed Standards

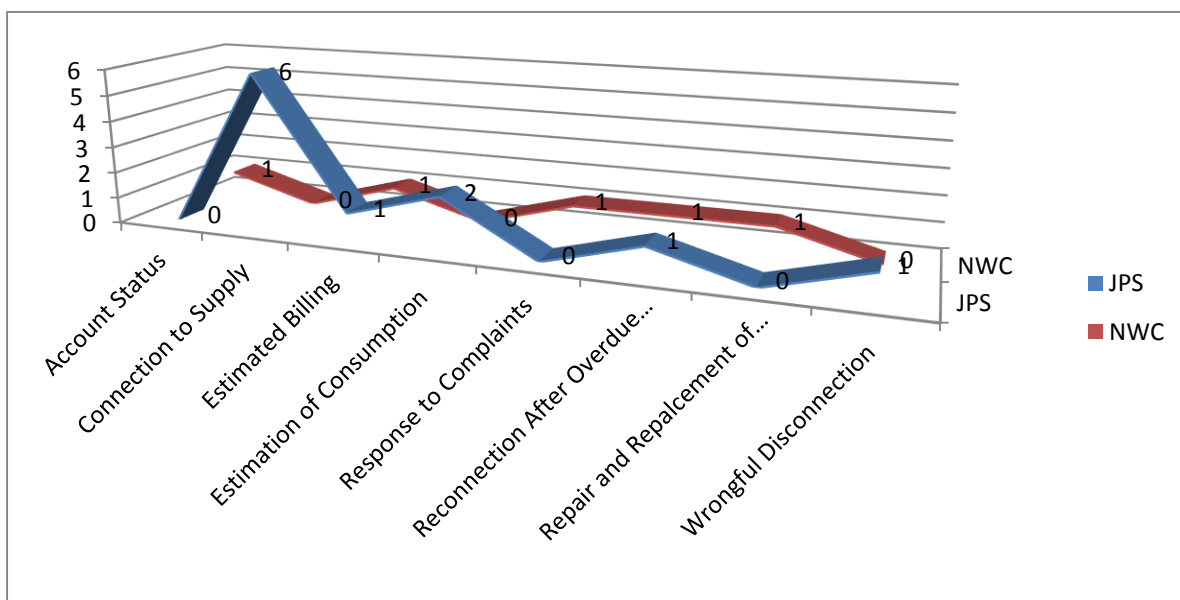
As shown in Figure 2, a total of sixteen (16) contacts were received in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards. JPS accounted for eleven (11) contacts while the remaining five (5) were for the NWC.

For JPS, contacts in relation to perceived Guaranteed Standards breaches related to *Connection to Supply, Estimated Billing, Estimation of Consumption, Restoration After Payment of Overdue Amount* and *Wrongful Disconnection*.

In the case of the NWC, the areas complained about related to: *Account Status, Estimated Billing, Reconnection after Payment of Overdue Amounts, Repair and Replacement of Faulty Meters and Response to Complaints*.

The reports from the JPS and the NWC on their performance on the Guaranteed Standards for the review period were not received at the time of writing.

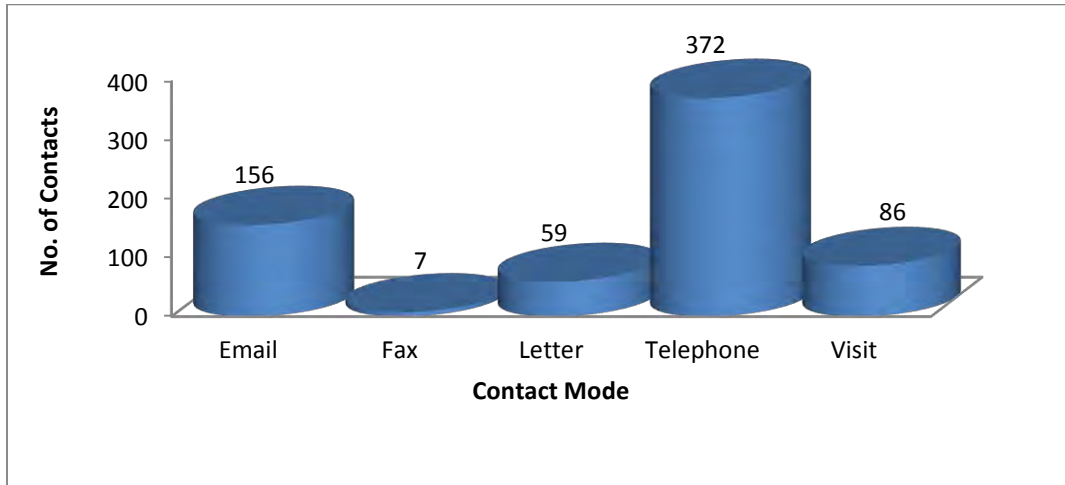
Figure 2: Guaranteed Standards Contact



Mode of Contact

The telephone continues to be the method most frequently used by consumers to make contact with the OUR. Of the six hundred and eighty (680) contacts, fifty-five (55%) were received by telephone. Emails accounted for twenty-three percent (23%) while visits and letters represented thirteen percent (13%) and nine (9) of contact mode. Less than one percent (1%) of contacts was received by way of fax. Details are shown in Figure 3.

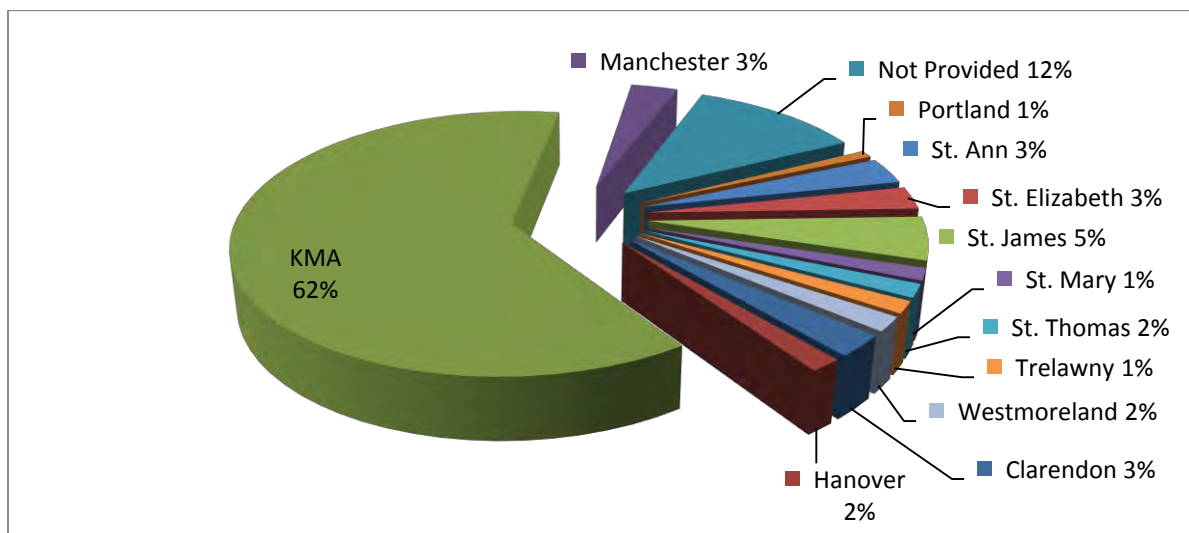
Figure 3: Method of Contact



Geographical Distribution of Contacts

The Kingston Metropolitan Region continued to account for the highest number of total contacts at sixty-two percent (62%), as depicted in Figure 4. St. James accounted for the second highest number of contacts at five percent (5%) while Manchester, St. Ann, St. Elizabeth and Clarendon each accounted for three percent (3%) of total contacts. The remaining parishes each had a share of two percent (2%) or less while twelve percent (12%) 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 Appeals ¹

During the review period, fifteen (15) appeals were closed with 60% of those resolved being in favour of the service provider. Of the 15 closed appeals, fourteen (14) were carried forward from previous periods while one (1) was an appeal received during the period.

Outstanding Appeals²

One hundred and three (103) appeals remain outstanding and these were carried forward from previous periods. Of these outstanding appeals, forty-six percent (46%) and thirty-eight percent (38%) represent billing complaints from JPS and NWC customers, respectively. Matters relating to alleged damage to JPS customers' equipment represent eleven percent (11%) of the outstanding appeals; while the remaining five percent (5%) account for other appeal categories.

Credits/Compensation

Resulting from our investigation of appeals, an amount of \$10,763,655.18 was secured for utility customers. Credits to accounts of JPS customers accounted for ninety-nine (99%) of the amounts reversed while the remaining one percent (1%) represented credits to customers of the NWC.

¹ Breakdown of Appeals Closures can be seen in Table 3

² Breakdown of Outstanding Appeals can be seen in Table 4

Tables

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

	Description	JPS	NWC	LIME Landline	LIME Mobile	LIME Internet	Digicel	Small Telecoms Provider	Small Water Provider	FLOW	Other/Not Utility Provider Related	Total
A	Contacts for the Quarter											
(i)	New Appeals	18	18	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	38
(ii)	New Appeals - Pending Information	1	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
(iii)	New Complaints	16	14	9	3	1	9	0	1	3	1	57
(iv)	New Enquires	15	5	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	4	34
(v)	New Opinions	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
(vi)	New Referrals	236	153	36	44	11	38	2	7	6	8	541
	Total Contacts	288	196	47	48	13	49	3	11	11	14	680
B	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:											
(i)	Mutually Resolved/Compromise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(ii)	Withdrawn by Customer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(iii)	Insufficient Information	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(iv)	Resolved in Favour of Customer	5	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
(v)	Resolved in Favour of Utility	6	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total Closures	11	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
C	Total Appeals from Previous Periods:											
	Outstanding Appeals with OUR											
(i)	Awaiting Final Letters to Customers	16	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	33
(ii)	Undergoing Analysis/Determination	25	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
	Total Outstanding Appeals with the OUR	41	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	71
	Outstanding Appeals with Utility (Awaiting Responses)											
(iii)	Awaiting Responses	28	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	53
	Total Outstanding Appeals	69	55	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	124

Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Providers										Total
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow	LIME	Decal Wireless	DEML	CanCara Developers	Runaway Bay Water Company Ltd.	OUR/Other (not utility related)	
Billing Matters	157	128	6	3	18	0	2	0	1	2	317
Broken Main	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Customer Service	0	4	2	1	8	0	0	0	0	0	15
Defective Street Lights	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Disconnection/Reconnection	15	10	1	2	11	0	0	0	0	0	39
Equipment Damage	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16
Illegal Connection	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Interruption of Service	28	13	6	2	29	0	5	0	0	0	83
Irregular Supply	1	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Metering	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Other	36	18	21	3	18	2	2	1	0	12	113
Payment Arrangement	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Phone Cards	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	6
Plan Changes/Query	0	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	5
Poor Service Quality	2	1	7	0	18	1	0	0	0	0	29
Property Damage	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
RAMI System	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
Security Deposit	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Service Connection	11	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	13
Total	288	196	49	11	108	3	9	1	1	14	680

Table 3: Distribution of Appeals by Utilities (Closed)

Complaint Category	Service Provider		Totals
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	9	4	13
Payment of Compensation	1	0	1
Other	1	0	1
Total	11	4	15

Table 4: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Distribution of Appeals Outstanding			
Complaint Category	Service Providers		Totals
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	49	51	100
Disconnection	0	1	1
Equipment Damage	15	0	15
Illegal Connection	1	0	1
Leak at Meter	0	1	1
Meter Installation	0	1	1
Property Damage	4	0	4
Wrongful Disconnection	0	1	1
Total	69	55	124

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	89%	Total New Appeals - 38
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within 5 business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	69%	Total Case Letter/ Email sent to utility - 38
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	9%	Total responses received from utilities to Case Letters submitted during the review period 11

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.