
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer Affairs Unit
Quarterly Performance Report

Quarterly Performance Report October - December 2014

Publication Date: February 16, 2015



36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10

Consumer Affairs Unit Quarterly Performance Report

Document Number: 2015/GEN/001/QPR.001

Publication Date: February 16, 2015

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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 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. (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

For the October to December 2014 quarter, the number of contacts to the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) totalled seven hundred and fifty-nine (759). This represents the highest number of contacts received when compared with previous quarters during 2014 and a twelve percent (12%) increase over the preceding reporting period. In comparison to the same period in 2013, the 759 contacts represent a 34% increase in the number of contacts received by the CAU. This notable increase also trumps the July to September quarter as the period in which the highest number of contacts is received on an annual basis.

The increase in contacts for the review period can be attributed to a 44% uptick in the number of contacts relating to services provided by customers of telecommunications provider LIME, when compared to the preceding quarter. Contacts in relation to the Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) and the National Water Commission (NWC) also increased by 14% and 4% respectively.

The noticeable increase in customer contact was as a result of LIME's decision to introduce a charge for the preparation and delivery of paper bills. LIME advised that this move was in an effort to encourage customers to opt for receiving bills by email; which in its view was a more environmentally friendly choice. Following the general public outcry, the OUR held a meeting with LIME representatives which resulted in the company postponing the implementation date for the paper bill charge from January 1, 2015. The OUR is continuing its discussions with LIME regarding the validity and reasonableness of the proposed charge.

In regard to JPS, there was a 12% increase in contacts relating to billing matters, while contacts for the NWC in relation to service connection increased to 9 from the one received in the preceding quarter.

Except for small water provider CanCara Developers Ltd., there was a reduction in the number of contacts relating to services provided by all other regulated entities.

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-three percent (43%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – twenty-seven percent (27%)
- LIME – twenty per cent (20%)
- Digicel – five per cent (5%)
- FLOW, small telecommunications provider Decal Wireless and the small water providers Dynamic Environmental Management Ltd. (DEML) and CanCara Developers – four percent (4%).
- Other/Not Utility Provider Related – 1%

JPS, at 44%, was the most complained about utility service provider throughout **2014**. NWC, LIME and Digicel followed with 30%, 15% and 7% of contacts respectively. Contacts relating to all other service providers were 1% or less. **(See Table 6).**

Utilities Responsiveness

Acknowledgements

Twenty-eight (28) requests for information were sent in the form of case letters to the respective service providers regarding customers' appeals. Of the 27 requests, eleven (11) were submitted to JPS for which five (5) acknowledgements, representing 45%, were received within the agreed five business day timeline. Sixteen (16) Case Letters were sent to the NWC of which 11 (or 69%) were acknowledged; with only one acknowledgement being outside of the aforementioned agreed timeline. One case letter was sent to telecoms provider Flow for which there was no acknowledgement.

The number of acknowledgements received from both the JPS and the NWC has improved significantly during the second half of 2014 when compared with the first half of the year. Details of the companies' performance on acknowledgements are as follows:

Quarters	JPS	NWC	Rate Of Acknowledgement
January – March	13%	0%	
April - June	13%	27%	
July - September	28%	72%	
October - December	45%	69%	

Responses to Case Letters

Similar to the acknowledgements, JPS provided responses to five (5) of the eleven case letters that were sent with only one being outside of the agreed timeline of 25 business days.

For the NWC, responses were received for two (2) - representing 13% - of the 16 case letters sent. The two responses were received within the agreed 30 working day timeline.

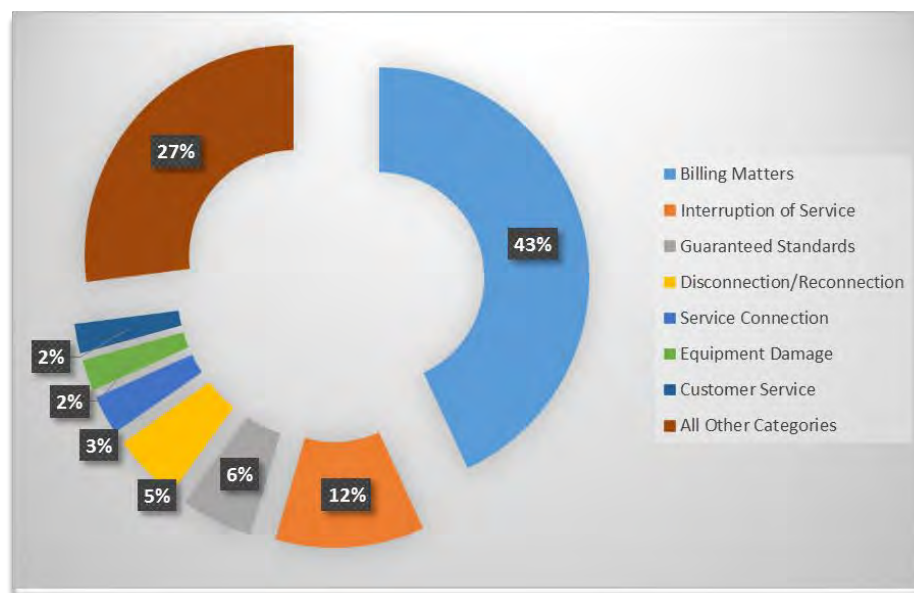
Throughout 2014, JPS was the service provider that was most responsive to the OUR's requests for information within the stipulated timeline. However, there was a marked reduction in the number of responses that were received within the agreed timeline in the second half of the year when compared with the January – June period. The details of the responses received within agreed timeline are as follows:

Quarters	JPS	NWC	Flow	St. Jago Developers
Jan – Mar	73%	0%	-	-
Apr - Jun	87%	0%	-	-
Jul - Sept	39%	17%	-	0%
Oct - Dec	36%	13%	0%	0%

Main Customer Concerns

As shown in Figure 1, the main reasons for utility customers contacting the CAU were: Billing Matters, Service Interruption, Guaranteed Standards, Disconnection/Reconnection, Service Connection, Equipment Damage and Customer Service issues.

Figure 1: Main Customer Concerns



Billing

Matters related to billing continued to be the main cause for contacts to the unit, representing forty-three percent (43%) of total contacts received during the review period. This represents a four (4) percentage point reduction in similar contacts when compared with the previous reporting period.

For JPS and NWC, contacts relating to billing represented fifty-three (53%) and fifty-six percent (56%) respectively. These billing related matters included adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, retroactive billing, disputed charges and estimated billing.

For customers of the telecommunications providers, billing related matters represented seventeen percent (17%), eighteen percent (18%), ten percent (10%) and thirty-three percent (33%) of contacts for Digicel, LIME, FLOW and Decal Wireless respectively.

Additionally, throughout the year, billing related contacts accounted for 48% of total contacts. Details of the total contacts in relation to the reason for the contact is shown in **Table 3**.

Service Interruption

Contacts relating to interruption of service showed a one percentage point reduction to 11% from the 12% received in the preceding quarter. Telecommunications provider LIME continued to account for the greatest share of service interruption related contacts at 6%, which is a two percentage point increase over the previous period. JPS, NWC, and the remaining telecommunications providers saw a reduction in their share of service interruption contacts of 2% or less.

Disconnection/Reconnection

Disconnections and Reconnections accounted for five percent (5%) of total contacts received which is a one percentage point reduction from the previous period. Again, 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 CanCara Developers, DEML and Digicel shared the remaining one percent (2%) of total contacts received.

Equipment Damage

Similar to the previous reporting period, issues relating to equipment damage accounted for two percent (2%) of total contacts. These contacts also represented five percent (5%) of contacts specific to the services provided by JPS.

Customer Service

LIME and the JPS 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 customers, these accounted for less than one percent (1%) of the total received.

Guaranteed Standards

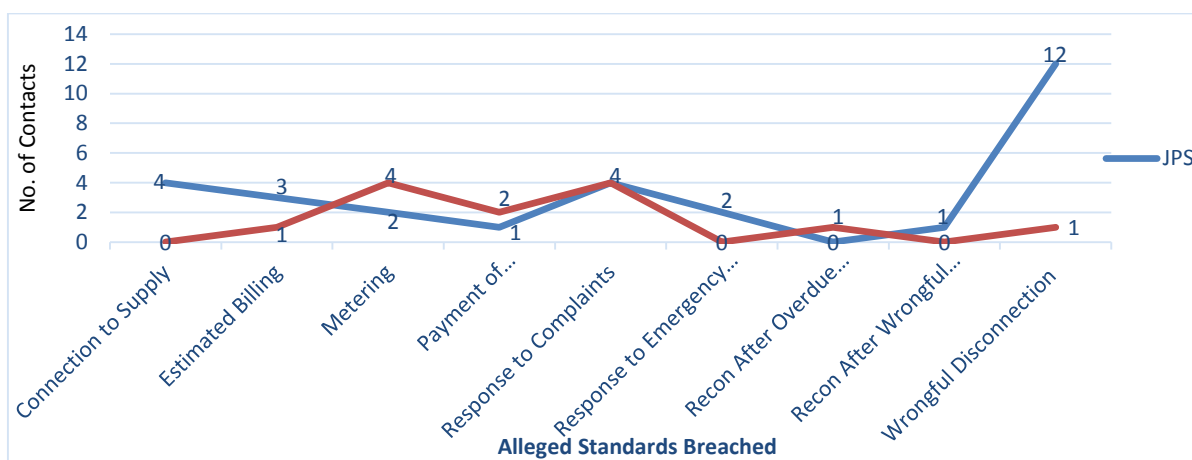
Contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards by the JPS and the NWC amounted to forty-two (42), which represents six percent (6%) of total contacts received during the review period. JPS accounted for 4% of the contacts while the remaining 2% were for the NWC.

As is shown in Figure 2, the highest number of contacts in relation to perceived Guaranteed Standards breaches for JPS related to *Wrongful Disconnection*. The other alleged breaches most complained about were *Connection to Supply*, *Metering* and *Response to Complaints*.

In the case of the NWC, the greatest number of contacts in relation to alleged breaches related to *Metering* 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 compiling this report. JPS has advised however that its ability to track and report on its compliance with the standards has been impaired by the process to upgrade its Customer Information System. However, no explanation has been proffered by the NWC for its delay in submitting the report.

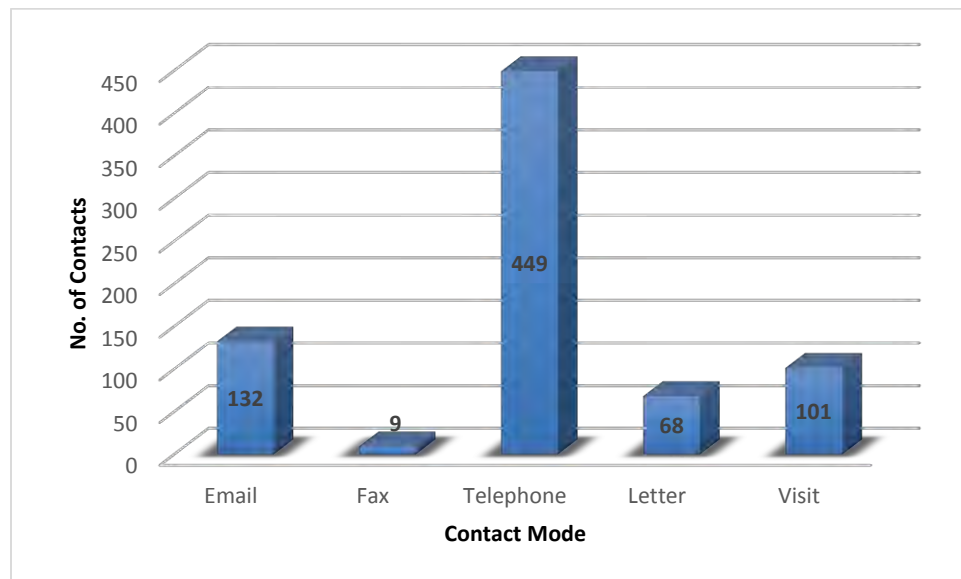
Figure 2: Guaranteed Standards Contact



Mode of Contact

The telephone continues to be the method most frequently used by consumers to make contact with the CAU and represented fifty-nine (59%) of the total contacts received. Emails and visits accounted for seventeen percent (17%) and thirteen percent (13%) respectively. Letters accounted for nine percent (9%) of contact mode while the remaining 1% of contacts was received via fax. Details are shown in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3: Method of Contact (Oct – Dec 2014)



Throughout **2014**, telephone maintained its dominance as the main method of contact to the CAU at 55%. Email, visits and letters followed at 18%, 15% and 11% respectively. Only one percent (1%) of contacts were received by way of fax.

Geographical Distribution of Contacts

The Kingston Metropolitan Region continued to account for the highest number of total contacts at sixty percent (60%), as depicted in Figure 4. The second highest number of contacts, at four percent (4%), was received from St. James while St. Elizabeth accounted for the third highest number of contacts at three percent (3%). The remaining parishes each had a share of two percent (2%) or less while seventeen percent (17%) of the contacts received provided no information on their location/parish or the information was not recorded.

Category	Percentage
Clarendon	17%
St. Ann	2%
St. Elizabeth	2%
Trelawny	2%
Hanover	4%
St. James	3%
Westmoreland	2%
KMR	2%
St. Mary	2%
St. Thomas	1%
Manchester	2%
Portland	1%
Not Provided	60%

Closures of Appeals ¹

Of the 62 closed appeals, eighty-nine percent (89%) were carried forward from previous periods while the remaining eleven percent (11%) represents appeals that were received and resolved within the established 65 working days period.

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Outstanding Appeals²

At the end of the reporting period, ninety-six (96) appeals remain outstanding, meaning they have exceeded the established 65 working days for resolution. Of these outstanding appeals, thirty-six percent (36%) and thirty-eight percent (38%) represent billing complaints from JPS and NWC customers, respectively. One billing related matter remains outstanding for small water provider St. Jago Developers Ltd.

Matters relating to alleged damage to JPS customers' equipment and property represent eighteen percent (21%) of the outstanding appeals; while the remaining five percent (5%) account for other appeal categories outlined in Table 4.

Credits/Compensation

For the review period, an amount of \$3,991,863.74 was secured for utility customers as a result of our investigation into their appeals. Compensation to accounts of JPS customers accounted for eighty-five (85%) of the amounts paid while the remaining fifteen percent (15%) represented credits to customers of the NWC.

The total amount secured for utility consumers for the **year 2014** was \$23,666,071.13. Similar to the reporting period, the percentage share of credits by service providers were 85% for JPS and 15% for NWC. While monies, in the form of credits, were secured for customers of Digicel and LIME, their percentage share was less than one percent.

² Breakdown of Outstanding Appeals can be seen in Table 5

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	13	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
(ii)	New Appeals - Pending Information	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
(iii)	New Complaints	12	5	19	2		8	0	1	0	0	47
(iv)	New Enquires	31	15	1	1		1	0	4	0	2	55
(v)	New Opinions	6	1	18		1	1	0	0	0	1	28
(vi)	New Referrals	266	162	68	22	23	31	3	7	10	3	595
	Total Contacts	329	203	106	25	24	41	3	12	10	6	759
B	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:											
(i)	Addressed	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
(ii)	Mutually Resolved/Compromise	4	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
(iii)	Resolved in Favour of Customer	7	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
(iv)	Resolved in Favour of Utility	19	19	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	38
	Total Closures	30	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	62
C	Total Appeals from Previous Periods:											
	Outstanding Appeals with OUR											
(i)	Awaiting Final Letters to Customers	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	11
(ii)	Undergoing Analysis/Determination	21	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
	Total Outstanding Appeals with the OUR	30	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	39
	Outstanding Appeals with Utility (Awaiting Responses)	25	30	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	57
	Total Outstanding Appeals	55	39	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	96

Table 2: Distribution of Contacts by Utilities

Complaint Category	Service Providers									Total
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	Flow	LIME	Decal Wireless	DEML	CanCra Developers	OUR/Other (not utility related)	
Billing Matters	176	114	7	1	28	1	0	0	0	327
Broken Main	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Customer Service	5	0	3	0	9	0	0	0	0	17
Defective Street Lights	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Disconnection/Reconnection	13	6	1	0	17	0	2	1	0	40
Equipment Damage	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Guaranteed Standards	29	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	42
Guaranteed Standards Query	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8
Illegal Connection	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Interruption of Service	18	11	3	3	49	1	0	2	0	87
Irregular Supply	2	13	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	16
Metering	4	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	12
Other	27	24	16	4	42	1	1	3	6	124
Payment Arrangement	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Phone Cards	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	0	0	6
Plan Changes/Query	0	0	9	1	2	0	0	0	0	12
Poor Service Quality	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Property Damage	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Removal of Utility Pole	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Security Deposit	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Service Connection	12	9	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	23
Total	329	203	41	10	155	3	5	7	6	759

Table 3: Distribution of Contacts Jan. – Dec. 2014

Complaint Category	Review Periods (2014)				
	Jan - Mar	Apr - Jun	July - Sept	Current Quarter (Oct-Dec)	Total (Jan-Dec 2014)
Billing Matters	313	237	317	327	1194
Broken Main	2	0	2	1	5
Customer Service	4	15	15	17	51
Defective Street Lights	0	4	3	7	14
Disconnection/Reconnection	50	27	39	40	156
Equipment Damage	14	11	16	18	59
Guaranteed Standards	0	0	0	42	42
Guaranteed Standards Query	0	2	0	8	10
Health & Safety	7	1	0	0	8
Illegal Connection	7	2	3	6	18
Interruption of Service	43	57	83	87	270
Irregular Supply	8	10	12	16	46
Metering	9	12	7	12	40
Other	52	83	113	124	372
Payment Arrangement	6	3	5	3	17
Payment of Compensation	2	1	0	0	3
Phone Cards	4	2	6	6	18
Plan Changes/Query	0	0	5	12	17
Poor Service Quality	5	15	29	2	51
Property Damage	2	5	1	3	11
RAMI System	0	0	10	0	10
Removal of Utility Pole	0	0	0	3	3
Response to Emergency	0	2	0	0	2
Security Deposit	0	0	1	2	3
Service Connection	13	15	13	23	64
Total	541	504	680	759	2484

Table 4: Distribution of Appeals by Utilities (Closed)

Complaint Category	Service Provider		Totals
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	23	29	52
Equipment Damage	3	0	3
Illegal Connection	1	0	1
Metering	1	1	2
Other	1	1	2
Property Damage	1	0	1
Disconnection	0	1	1
Total	30	32	62

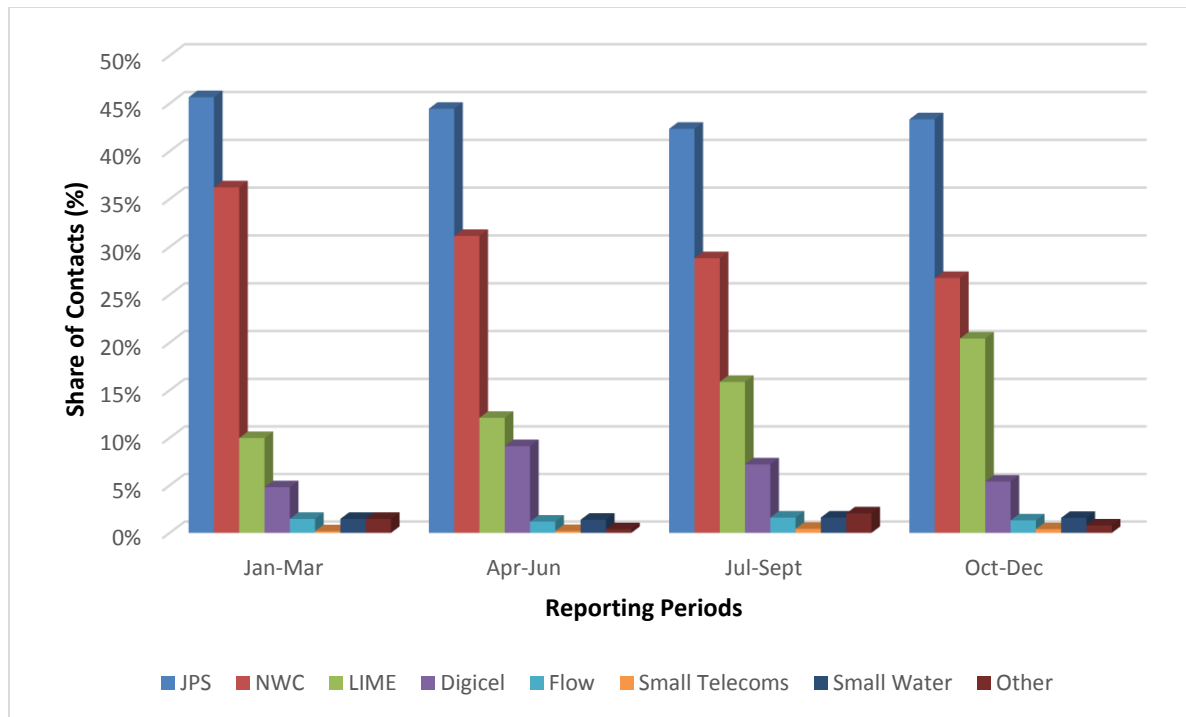
Table 5: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Distribution of Appeals Outstanding					
Complaint Category	Service Providers				Total
	JPS	NWC	Flow	St. Jago Developers	
Billing Matters	35	36	0	1	72
Disconnection	0	1	1	0	2
Equipment Damage	17	0	0	0	17
Leak at Meter	0	1	0	0	1
Other	0	1	0	0	1
Property Damage	3	0	0	0	3
Total	55	39	1	1	96

Table 6: Contact Summary Jan – Dec 2014

Utility	Review Periods				Total (Jan - Dec 2014)
	Jan - Mar	Apr - Jun	Jul - Sept	Oct - Dec	
JPS	247	224	288	329	1088
NWC	196	157	196	203	752
LIME	54	61	108	155	378
Digicel	26	46	49	41	162
Flow	8	6	11	10	35
Small Telecoms Providers	1	1	3	3	8
Small Water Providers	1	7	11	12	31
Other/Not Utility Provider Related	8	2	14	6	30
Total	541	504	680	759	2484

Figure 5: Utility Share of Contacts Jan - Dec 2014



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 - 30
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within 5 business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	80%	Total Case Letter sent to utility - 27
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	100%	Of the 7 Provider Responses received, only 2 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.