

The REGULATOR

Newsletter of the Office of Utilities Regulation

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Director General reflects on ten years of independent regulation

By: J. Paul Morgan - Director General

2007 marks the 10th Anniversary of the OUR. The Office opened its doors to the public on the 2nd of January 1997. In fact, although the first Director General, Winston C. Hay, was appointed on the 1st of October 1996, the Office itself was only properly constituted with the appointments of Delreo Newman and myself as Deputy Directors General effective January 2, 1997.

Although mindful that the legal framework under which we operate does not provide all the powers that we would wish, I do believe that they have provided a reasonable foundation on which to build. As a creature of statute, the OUR can only operate within the framework of its enabling legislation, we certainly cannot take on to ourselves powers that we do not have.

We have tried, in the context of various limitations, to deliver efficient services to all our stakeholders and at all times tried to offer "value for money". We have tried to make balanced and reasoned decisions and to act in a transparent manner.

Our intent has always been to do the "right thing" rather than the "popular thing" with the singular objective to foster the development of our country through the delivery of safe, economic and reliable services at reasonable prices.

So, as we look to the next 10 years, I wish to record my sincerest thanks to Members of the Office and all members of the OUR family, present and past, for their contributions, fixity of purpose and dedication to excellence.

May I wish all readers a productive and rewarding 2007.

Also Inside This Issue

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- CACU
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"Regulating Utilities for the Benefit of All"

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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.
- To act independently and impartially.

What you need to know about broadband

By: Carey Anderson, Economist

What is broadband (internet)?

The term 'Broadband' really refers to a high speed internet connection with data speeds in excess of 128 kilobits per second (Kbps).

Simply put, broadband is a faster way for you to gain access to the Internet and the sites or pages that you want to see. Whenever you go to a web page, there are files that must be sent to your computer such as the page itself, images, and other components that make up each page that you look at. These files vary in size and generally, the more files that must be transported, the longer it takes for the page to load. A broadband line can send those files to your computer faster than a dial-up line can and therefore, you can see the entire page faster.

Broadband is provided by telecommunications companies through normal telephone lines and by Cable TV operators through the cable television line. Broadband services may also be available through wireless technology. This type of technology is especially useful in remote or rural areas where there are no telephone lines or cable internet connections.

For a wireless Internet connection, a small antenna is installed on the outside of your house (much like a TV aerial) and this sends signals to a connection point on the inside, which in turn is connected to your computer. No telephone line of any kind is required.

Why broadband?

The increased need for information brought on by the forces of globalization, such as foreign trade and investment, requires advanced and robust technological infrastructure to transmit voice, data (texts, pictures, etc) and video signals in a timely manner.

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What you need to know about broadband

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People need to keep and stay in touch with family and friends through emails, phone calls, web cams, which are all made easier through broadband internet.

Broadband has also significantly reduced the cost of traditional telephone services through the development of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) technology which has served to reduce the cost for making international calls.

Services resulting from broadband

Broadband has certainly made its mark in home entertainment in particular. It has led to the creation of many home entertainment services that are geared to improving that experience. Services such as video on demand, high speed music downloads, music on demand, pay-per-view entertainment and gaming on demand are available through broadband connection.

Broadband internet is set to bring a new meaning to staying at home and working from home. With broadband giving access to e-business and e-commerce one can transact vast amounts of business activities speedily and simultaneously from home just by logging onto broadband internet.

THE CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES (CACU)

By: Yasmin Chong - Chairperson

In its short Six (6) years of existence, the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) has emerged as the primary consumer advocate on utilities in Jamaica. Established in 2001 by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR), the CACU is one of the forums through which OUR receives consumers' views on broad regulatory issues as well as their perspective on issues affecting the relationships between the utility companies and consumers.

DID YOU KNOW

By: Denise McCalla, Public Relations Assistant

Did you know that.....?

- Next to air-conditioners, water heaters are typically the largest energy user in the home.
- Refrigerators can consume more energy than any electrical kitchen appliance in your home. New, efficient models use about half the electricity compared to older refrigerators.
- If you replace regular incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs although they cost a little more up front, you'll save significantly in the long run.
- If you turn off the water while brushing your teeth, you can save three gallons each day.

The fourteen member CACU is comprised of persons drawn from consumer groups, the private and public sectors, youth and the general public. In keeping with its mandate of advocacy and representation, the CACU has adopted two important principles, which guide the Committee's work - COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION.

In order to access consumer views and opinions, the CACU has established a network of Parish Liaison Committees (PLCs) in fourteen parishes with robust participation from citizens who reside within them.

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THE CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UTILITIES (CACU)

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The CACU encourages members of the public to get involved in this important and exciting area of public life. Contact may be made with the CACU by telephone (968-6053), mail (3rd Floor, PCJ Resource Centre, 36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10) or e-mail (cacu@our.org.jm).

Editor's note ; Although established by OUR, CACU is an independent group. CACU members call the shots as they see them. OUR does not censor their statements or press releases. In fact on several occasions CACU and OUR have differed on issues, and this is as it should be. CACU's only mandate is what is best for consumers. OUR on the other hand does a balancing act with its three stakeholders, the Government, Utility Companies and Consumers. It is hoped that consumers will over time become more effective at lobbying the OUR.

MONTHLY VISITS TO PARISH LIBRARIES SCHEDULE

<u>January 2007</u>	<u>February 2007</u>	<u>March 2007</u>	<u>April 2007</u>
St. Thomas Parish Library 22nd and 23rd	St. Mary Parish Library 5th and 6th	Trelawny Parish Library 5th and 6th	Hanover Parish Library 2nd and 3rd
Portland Parish Library 24th and 25th	St. Ann Parish Library 7th and 8th	St. James Parish Library 7th and 8th	Westmoreland Parish Library 4th and 5th
<u>April-May 2007</u>	<u>May 2007</u>	<u>June 2007</u>	
St. Elizabeth Parish Library 30th and 1st	Clarendon Parish Library 28th and 29th	Kingston and St. Andrew Parish Library 18 and 19th	
Manchester Parish Library 2nd and 3rd	St. Catherine Parish Library 30th and 31st		

Contact

3rd floor PCJ Resource Centre
36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10
Tel: (876) 968-6053-4
Toll free 1888-Call-OUR (2255-687)
Fax: 929-3635.
E-mail: consumer@our.org.jm
Website address: www.our.org.jm

Consumer Relations Unit (CRU)

The Consumer Relations Unit (CRU) is a part of the Consumer and Public Affairs Department of the OUR. The CRU interfaces with the public on a daily basis. The unit advises consumers about the Guaranteed Standards, reviews, investigates and resolves consumer issues that have been brought to the OUR's attention via letters, telephone calls and visits by affected consumers.

We live by our creed:

Together We Educate & Protect Consumers

Garfield Bryan
Manager

OUR's Role

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.

If you have received unsatisfactory service from a utility company (electricity, water, telephone), you may be entitled to a compensatory payment from the respective company. Contact the Consumer and Public Affairs Department of the OUR or fill out a complaint form available at post offices islandwide.

If you have questions about the role of The OUR or would like us to speak at any Community, Church or Citizens Association meetings, Contact: **Denise McCalla**- Public Relations Assistant. 3rd Floor, PCJ Resource Centre, 36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10. **Toll free:** 1888-Call OUR (2255-687).
Email: dmccalla@our.org.jm