



MARCH 2015

# INSIDE THE OUR

Office of Utilities Regulation  
Regulating Utilities For The Benefit Of All

## OUR PARISH CONNECTIONS HIT THE ROAD



**ALL HANDS ON DECK:** Utility service providers show united support with the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) March 9 Press Launch at the Knutsford Court Hotel. For the first time all the service providers will accompany the OUR on its all-island public education road show beginning in March 2015 and ending in January 2016. From left to right are: Andrew Lee, Director, Carrier and Regulatory Affairs (FLOW); Charles Douglas, Regional Regulatory Advisor (LIME); Patrick King, Director, Customer Solutions (Digicel); Ms. Winsome Callum, Director, Corporate Communications, JPS; Albert Gordon, Director General, (OUR) and Charles Buchanan, Director, Corporate Communications (NWC).

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) kicked off its islandwide public education programme with the Parish Connections series in March. In an unprecedented move the OUR partnered with the utilities as well as consumer advocacy stakeholders.

The primary objectives of the Parish Connections series are to educate consumers on their rights and responsibilities, provide energy saving tips and other useful information and put consumers directly in touch with utility companies to address their queries.

Partners in this outreach programme include the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS), the National Water Commission (NWC), LIME, Digicel, and Flow, and consumer advocacy groups, the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU).

Speaking at the press launch on March 9, 2015, Director of Consumer and Public Affairs Mrs. Yvonne Grinam-Nicholson pointed out that the parish connections are aimed at reaching particularly consumers in the under-served rural parishes of Jamaica. "We want to facilitate active communications channels and to re-establish continuing consumer and stakeholder dialogue so that there can be a two-way flow of information about consumer concerns. What is different about this public education push is that all the utilities providers have agreed to come along with us."

"We are indeed grateful for this collaboration because it will give consumers direct access to their service providers and allow them to ask questions and hear the parish plans that the organizations have for them."

In a concerted effort to reach all consumers, activities for the Parish Connections series include Town Hall Meetings and Consumer Day expositions, visits to schools and stakeholder groups such as chambers of commerce and service clubs.

The series started in Westmoreland on Thursday, March 5 with a presentation by the OUR's Director of Regulation, Policy, Monitoring and Enforcement (RPME), Ansond Hewitt, to the Negril Resort Board targeting the hotel sector.

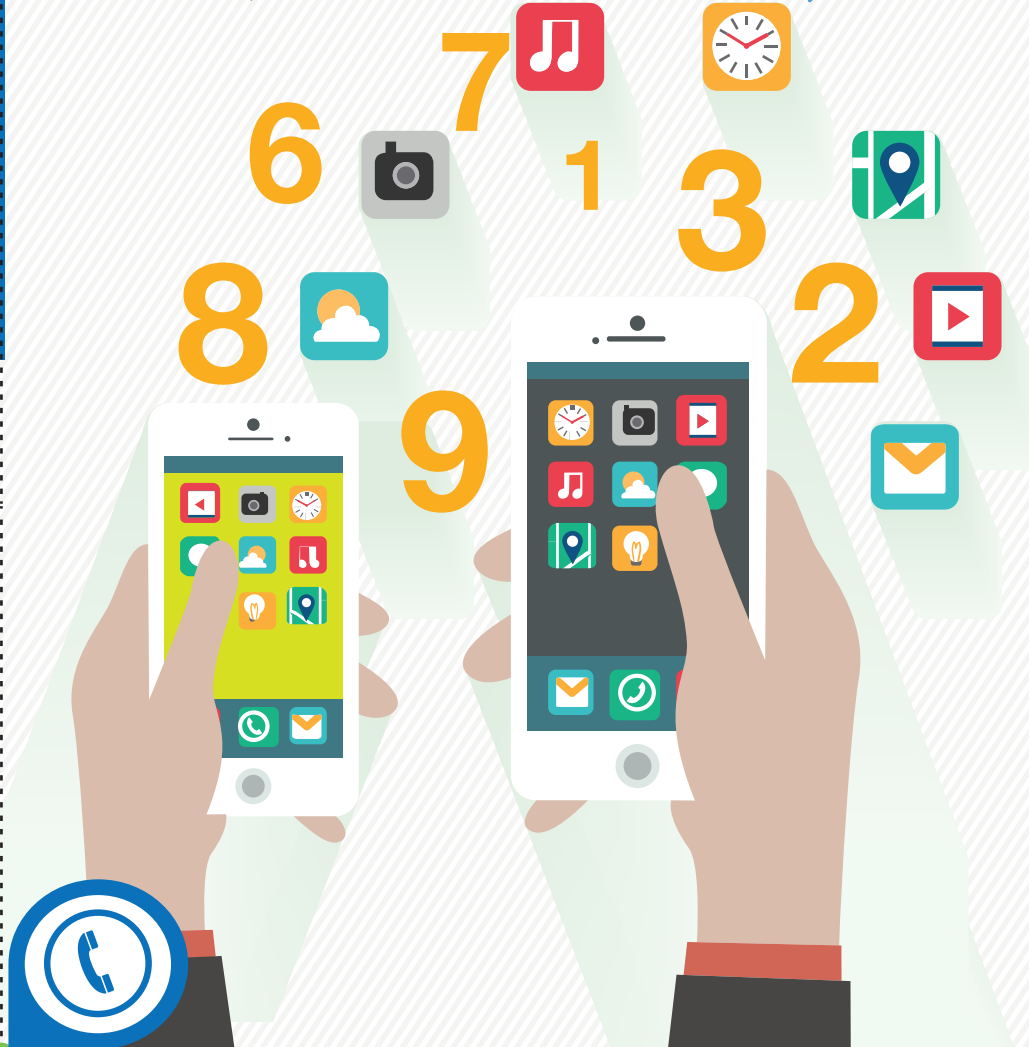
On Wednesday March 11, the OUR interfaced with students, faculty members and parents from schools in the western region of the parish at the Grange Hill High School. Students in particular were engaged about their rights and responsibilities as current utility customers of telecoms services, and future customers of other utility services. Digicel and LIME helped to guide students about how to make the best use of their mobile phones, while JPS set up a booth on energy saving.

The OUR was the special guest at the Rotary Club of Lucea meeting at the Grand Palladium Hotel at which members of the local chamber of commerce were also present.

Activities in Hanover and Westmoreland culminated in an all-day Town Hall Meeting and Consumer Day exposition at the Sean Lavery Faith Hall in Savanna-la-Mar on March 12. The day's activities started with the exposition by the OUR and seven of its partners and ended with consumers hearing from the utilities and having their queries addressed at the Town Hall meeting.

"We are aware of a perception by some consumers that because the OUR is funded by the utilities that it regulates that the agency is controlled by them but nothing is further from the truth. On the contrary, while it is recognized that the rights of utility companies must also be safeguarded, as regulator, the OUR is committed to protecting the rights of consumers and this is why we are inviting everyone to come out to these Town Hall meetings and the several other activities being staged in the parishes over the next ten months," said Project Manager, Elizabeth Bennett-Marsh.

## FACTS ABOUT NUMBER PORTABILITY



➔ Number portability enables telephone customers to retain their telephone numbers when switching from one provider of telecommunications services to another. Without number portability, customers have to change their numbers when they switch service providers.

➔ In the absence of number portability, customers face switching costs associated with informing people about changing their number, printing new business cards, missing valuable calls from people that do not have the new number, etc. Based on these considerations, regulatory authorities globally have placed number portability obligations on service providers to try to enhance competition in telecommunications markets.

➔ The first country to introduce mobile number portability was Singapore in 1997, followed by the UK, Hong Kong and the Netherlands in 1999.

➔ Canada, South Africa and the United States are the only countries that offer full number portability transfers between both fixed lines and mobile phone lines.

➔ In Jamaica, Number Portability falls under the remit of the Ministry of Science, Technology, Energy and Mining and under the Telecommunication Act, it is the Minister who places the obligation on telecommunications providers to provide Number Portability services. However, section 37(1) of the Telecommunications Act 2000, vests the OUR with the responsibility to advise the Minister on the making of rules imposing on public telecommunications carriers the responsibility to offer Number Portability.

## OUR Pictorial of Parish Connection series



VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.OUR.ORG.JM](http://WWW.OUR.ORG.JM) FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION.

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ADVT.