

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Utilities Pay out \$87M to Customers in 2020 Jan-March Quarter**

**(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2020 July 2):** Utility companies paid out approximately \$87M for service breaches to customers during the 2020 January to March quarter. This is a 117.5% increase over sums paid out in the preceding 2019 October to December quarter, when approximately \$40M was paid out by the utilities to affected customers for service breaches.

The latest figures are contained in the Office of Utilities Regulation’s (OUR) Quarterly Performance Report for 2020 January to March and reflects a combination of sums paid out for breaches of the Guaranteed Standards and payments/credit resulting from OUR’s direct intervention to resolve matters brought to its attention.

Approximately \$57.9M of the \$87M was secured for utility customers through the intervention of the OUR’s Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU). Of this sum, Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) paid out the highest share of \$57.8M (99%), the majority of which was credited to one of its largest customers, the National Water Commission (NWC). The remaining 1% of credits/compensation to customers was shared among C&WJ (Flow), Columbus Communications (Flow), Digicel, and the NWC.

Additionally, \$28M and \$1M was paid out by the JPS and the NWC respectively, for breaches of the Guaranteed Standards. The table below provides the breakdown.

**Sum paid out by utility companies (2020 January – March)**

<b>Utility Company</b>	<b>Sum paid out for breaches of the Guaranteed Standards</b>	<b>Sum paid out through action taken by OUR’s Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU)</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>\$M</b>	<b>\$M</b>	<b>\$M</b>
JPS	28.0	57.8	85.8
NWC	1.1	-	1.1
Flow, Digicel, NWC	-	0.1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>29.1</b>	<b>57.9</b>	<b>87.0</b>

JPS’s compliance report on its Guaranteed Standards’ performance indicated that 13,071 breaches were committed between 2020 January and February. No data were provided for March up to the time of publication of the OUR’s Quarterly report.

Non-compliance regarding Estimated Bills (*which restricts JPS from sending more than two consecutive estimates without a penalty*), Connection to Supply (*the time within which JPS is to make a simple connection*) and Reconnection (*which requires JPS to restore supply with 24 hours of payment of overdue amounts*) accounted for the highest incidents of breaches. The non-compliance with these standards accounted for approximately 99% of breaches and compensatory payments. /More

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The NWC's Guaranteed Standards compliance report indicates that 557 breaches were committed during this quarter, which represents a 7% increase when compared with the preceding period. These breaches had a potential pay-out of approximately \$1.98 million but actual payments amounted to approximately \$1M.

The actual payments represented 51% of total potential payments and were made by way of automatic credits to the affected accounts. The remaining 49% of potential payments not made, represented those breaches for which the required claim forms were not submitted for validation.

The standards with the highest incidents of breaches for the NWC were: Meter Installation (which stipulates that meters should be install within 30 working days upon request); Access (which requires that new service connections are made within 10 working days); Meter Repair/Replacement (which requires that meter repairs or replacements must be completed within 20 working days) and Meter Reading (which restricts the NWC to sending no more than two consecutive estimates, where it has access to its meter). These four standards represented 86% of total breaches and 82% of potential payments.

During the quarter, the CAU receiving 1,033 contacts, which represents a 4% increase over the preceding period.

Billing matters continued to be the main reason for customer contact during the 2020 January – March period and represented 41% or 420 of total contacts received. These matters included adjustments to customers' accounts, estimated billings, high consumption, disputed charges, and billing punctuality.

JPS and NWC accounted for the most billing contacts with 180 (17%) and 151 (15%), respectively. C&WJ (Flow) and Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for 57 (6%) and 15 (1%), respectively, while Digicel, Private Telecommunications Providers, Private Water Providers, and contacts not utility related accounted for the remaining 17 (2%).

The Quarterly Performance Report (2020 Jan-March) can be found on the OUR's website: [www.our.org.jm](http://www.our.org.jm).

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