



Office of Utilities Regulation

Regulating Utilities for the Benefit of All

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OUR gets \$63.6 million compensation for utilities consumers

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; August 20, 2014): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) obtained \$63,617,371.55 in compensation from the National Water Commission (NWC), Jamaica Public Service (JPS), LIME and Digicel, for utilities consumers over the last financial year ending March 2014.

This is more than three times the compensation of \$21 million secured by the OUR for consumers over the previous year. The customers who benefitted had filed appeals with the OUR after being dissatisfied with how the utility service providers addressed their complaints. The amounts secured by the OUR on customers' behalf resulted from the reversal of previously billed charges or relevant credits being applied to their accounts.

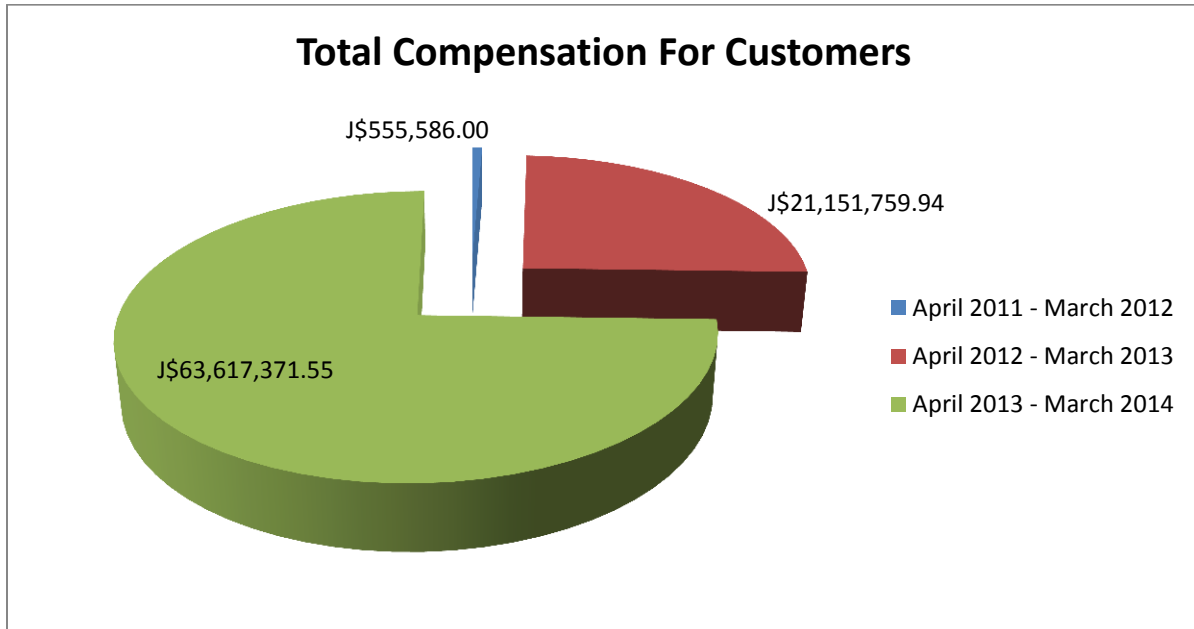
For the 2013-14 period, JPS and NWC account respectively for 79% and 20% of the credits that were applied to customers' accounts, while the remaining 1% was shared between telecommunications providers Digicel and LIME. Of the 285 appeals that were investigated, one hundred and fifty-four (154), representing 54%, were resolved/closed. Of those resolved, 35% were in favour of the customer and 53% were in the utilities' favour.

In the case of JPS, some customers' accounts were adjusted following the outcome of investigations for alleged illegal activities, while in the case of the NWC, previously-billed high consumption charges were reviewed and were reduced or written-off. The decision of both service providers to credit, reduce or write-off the disputed charges came after much discussion with the companies, and vigilance and perseverance by the OUR.

"In carrying out its regulatory role, the OUR must ensure that it takes into account the needs of all relevant stakeholder groups which include the Government of Jamaica, the utility service providers and its largest stakeholder group - the consumers of these utility services. While the organization is not a consumer advocacy group, the OUR does provide an avenue of appeal for utility consumers against decisions of these companies regarding their complaints", says OUR's Director General, Albert Gordon.

"As the OUR continues to fulfil one of its objectives - to ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at reasonable cost - we are pleased to report that our efforts are benefitting Jamaican consumers", he said.

“The OUR, through its Consumer and Public Affairs Department, will continue to be dogged in its work to safeguard the interests of customers of the utility companies. However, customers must hold the service providers more accountable, by knowing their rights as set out in the Guaranteed Service Standards, and making claims for any breach of these Standards,” Mr. Gordon noted.



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