

No Restrictions of Toll Free Numbers – says OUR

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2017 June 9): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) is confirming that it has placed no restrictions on the allocation of toll free numbers.

This clarification is necessary as the organization has recently received complaints that members of the public have been informed that we have restricted the assignment of toll free numbers which denied them access to preferred numbers even though the numbers in issue have not been otherwise assigned for use and should therefore be available for assignment. It has been brought to the OUR's attention that telecommunications companies were able to provide the service as requested but for the supposed non-availability of the requested toll free number.

Toll-free numbers allow callers to reach private and public persons without being charged for the call. The charge for calling a toll-free number is paid by the toll-free subscriber except that callers from a mobile network may be charged for airtime.

In response to a telecommunications industry petition to expedite the establishment of a comprehensive toll free numbering scheme, the OUR brought forward its previously planned development of a scheme to satisfy the requirement for competitive fairness and equity in the toll free service market.

Consequently, on 2016 April 16, the OUR issued its Determination Notice establishing the **Local Toll Free Numbering Scheme** (LTFNS). This followed four (4) months of public consultation, and after agreement with the local telecommunications industry on the OUR's proposals to provide full access to an expanded toll-free numbering capacity on a non-discriminatory and competitively neutral basis.

The OUR's determinations removed previous restrictions on access to local toll free numbers and made available a potential pool of ten million (10,000,000) local toll free numbers to telecommunications carriers and service providers for the provision of local toll free services to their customers. The OUR's decisions in this matter were made pursuant to section 8(2) of the Telecommunications Act which ensures transparent, non-discriminatory and efficient allocation, assignment and use of telecommunications numbers by the OUR, carriers and service providers and end-users, for the provision and consumption of telecommunications services in Jamaica.

In order to avert further unauthorised restrictions on access to toll free numbers by the public whether by design or default, the OUR issued a formal industry notification, on **2017 January 20**, giving notice to carriers and service providers that the Local Toll Free Numbering Scheme was fully operationalised.

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Carriers and service providers were also notified that should it become necessary, the OUR would issue this public statement on that action. The OUR may take further steps to enforce its requirements.

The OUR's Determination Notice on the LTFNS can be viewed on our website: www.our.org.jm.

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Contact: Elizabeth Bennett Marsh – Public Education Specialist: 968-6053