

Billing Complaints Spike in first Quarter

(KINGSTON, JAMAICA: 2016 July 14): Between January to March 2016, although there was a general decline in the number of contacts to the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR), there was a spike in the number of complaints about billing matters. This information is from the latest OUR Consumer Quarterly Performance Report (QPR).

At 49%, billing complaints remained the main reason for customer contact to the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) at the OUR. The billing issues complained about included adjustments that were applied to customers' accounts, high consumption, disputed charges and estimated billing. The Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) and National Water Commission (NWC) accounted for 37% and 43% respectively. Digicel accounted for 2% while Cable & Wireless Jamaica (FLOW) and Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for 10% and 5% respectively. Small water providers and contacts that were not utility related accounted for the remaining 2%.

Overall the CAU received 699 new contacts during the quarter, representing a 17% decline in the number of contacts received when compared with the previous quarter. The data indicate a general decline in contacts for most major areas of concern. The largest decline – at 27% - related to interruption of service.

Service interruption again accounted for the second highest reason for customer contacts, which at 20%, represented a two percentage point reduction over the preceding period. Disconnection and equipment damage each accounted for 4% of contacts.

There were twenty-six (26) contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards by the JPS and the NWC. Up to the time of publication of the Quarterly Performance Report, NWC had submitted only one part of its Guaranteed Standards report – the section that shows the number of breaches.

Over \$1.7 million was secured for utility consumers by the OUR during the January to March 2016 quarter, as a result of investigations into their appeals.

The Quarterly Performance Report can be accessed on our website: www.our.org.jm

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