

OUR To Consult on Automatic Compensation for Telecoms Breaches

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2019 December 3): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) plans to consult with industry stakeholders and the public about introducing automatic compensation for breaches of approved service standards by telecommunications operators. Service standards are currently being developed for the telecoms sector.

The OUR says the move has become necessary amidst continuing complaints about disruption of voice and internet services, from customers of FLOW and Digicel.

OUR's Director of Consumer and Public Affairs, Yvonne Nicholson, says, *"While we have met with the two companies and they have offered some reasons as to what accounts for the spate of disruptions, customers are still suffering and businesses are being impacted. How are they being compensated whenever they are without voice and internet services for prolonged periods? As the regulator, we have a responsibility to ensure customers receive good and consistent service from their utility providers."*

The OUR will be publishing the consultation document early in 2020. Comments will be invited from industry stakeholders and the public about the automatic compensation breaches. Both the document and the comments received will be posted on OUR's website. The OUR's final Decision, following the consultation process, will take account of, and be informed by international best practices and comments received.

This latest action represents ongoing efforts by the OUR to hold the telecommunications operators more accountable to their customers and provide redress for subpar service.

The OUR recently instructed both major telecommunications service providers, Digicel and FLOW to immediately provide their customers with service interruption notifications and updates on service restoration times. This comes against the background of persistent quality of service issues such as internet and voice service interruption. These include dropped calls, calls not being initiated and difficulties accessing customer service with sometimes inadequate redress.

The OUR has also spearheaded the drafting of Quality of Service Standards for the telecoms sector, which is now undergoing review before being promulgated.