

## **OUR's Action results in almost \$4-million in Compensation to Customers**

**(KINGSTON, Jamaica; February 23, 2015):** The continued vigilance of the Office of Utilities Regulation's Consumer Affairs Unit has resulted in utility customers being compensated almost \$4-million dollars during the October-December 2014 quarter.

The figure was released in the latest Quarterly Performance Report published by the OUR's Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU).

The sum of \$3,991,863.74 was secured for utility customers as a result of the unit's investigation into their appeals. Compensation to the accounts of Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS) customers accounted for eighty-five (85%) of the amounts paid while the remaining fifteen percent (15%) represented credits to customers of the NWC.

This latest figure brings to \$23,666,071.13 the total amount compensated to customers by utility companies for the year 2014, with approximately 85% going to JPS customers and 15% to NWC customers. While monies, in the form of credits, were secured for customers of Digicel and LIME, their share was less than one percent.

Additionally, for the October to December 2014 quarter, the number of contacts to the CAU totalled seven hundred and fifty-nine (759). This represents the highest number of contacts received when compared with previous quarters during 2014 and a twelve percent (12%) increase over the preceding reporting period. In comparison to the same period in 2013, the 759 contacts represent a 34% increase in the number of contacts received by the CAU. This notable increase also trumps the July to September quarter as the period in which the highest number of contacts is received on an annual basis.

The increase in contacts for the review period can be attributed to a 44% uptick in the number of contacts relating to services provided by customers of telecommunications provider LIME, when compared to the preceding quarter. This resulted from LIME's decision to introduce a charge for its paper bills. LIME advised that this was in an effort to encourage customers to opt for receiving bills by email, which in its view was a more environmentally friendly choice. Following the general public outcry, the OUR held a meeting with LIME representatives which resulted in the company postponing the implementation date for the paper bill charge. The OUR is continuing its discussions with LIME regarding the validity and reasonableness of the proposed charge.

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### Guaranteed Standards

Contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards by the JPS and the NWC amounted to forty-two (42), which represents six percent (6%) of total contacts received during the review period. JPS accounted for 4% of the contacts while the remaining 2% were for the NWC.

The highest number of contacts in relation to perceived Guaranteed Standards breaches for JPS related to *Wrongful Disconnection*. The other alleged breaches most complained about were *Connection to Supply, Metering and Response to Complaints*.

In the case of the NWC, the greatest number of contacts in relation to alleged breaches related to *Metering and Response to Complaints*.

The reports from the JPS and the NWC on their performance on the Guaranteed Standards for the review period were not received at the time of compiling the quarterly report. JPS has advised however that its ability to track and report on its compliance with the standards has been impaired by the process to upgrade its Customer Information System. However, no explanation has been proffered by the NWC for its delay in submitting the report.

The latest Quarterly Performance Report is available on the OUR's website: [www.our.org.jm](http://www.our.org.jm).

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