



OFFICE OF UTILITIES REGULATION

3rd Floor, P.C.J. Resource Centre, 36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10, Jamaica, W.I.
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PRESS RELEASE

OUR, utilities face consumers in Parish Connections

The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) will be undertaking an island wide public education programme throughout this year with its Parish Connections series, in partnership with the utilities that it regulates and other stakeholders.

The primary objectives of the Parish Connections series are to educate consumers on their rights and responsibilities, provide energy saving information and put consumers directly in touch their utility companies to address queries.

Project Coordinator, Mrs. Elizabeth Bennett Marsh said, "Through this channel, the OUR will facilitate active communications channel and re-establish continuing consumer and stakeholders dialogue so that there can be a two-way flow of information to the OUR on their various concerns."

Partners in this outreach programme effort include the Jamaica Public Service Company (JPS), the National Water Commission (NWC), LIME, Digicel, and Flow, and consumer advocacy groups, the Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU).

Mrs. Bennett Marsh said the series will allow utilities in particular to share information on projects and developmental issues with consumers on a planned and consistent basis.

In a concerted effort to reach all consumers, activities for the Parish Connections series include Town Hall Meetings and Consumer Day expositions, school visits and stakeholder groups such as chambers of commerce and service clubs.

The series kicks off in Westmoreland on Thursday, March 5 with a presentation to the Negril Resort Board targeting the hotel sector. The resort board meets at Radon Hotel at 2:00 p.m.

Activities continue next week Wednesday with the OUR interfacing with students, faculty members and parents from schools in the western region of the parish at the Grange Hill High School from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. about issues pertaining to the utility sectors.



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Students in particular will be engaged about their rights and responsibilities as current utility customers of telecoms services, and future customers of other utility services. Digicel and LIME will help to guide students about how to make the best use of their mobile phones, while JPS and NWC will set up booths on energy saving and best environmental practices.

Later that day, the OUR will be special guest at a meeting of the Rotary Club of Lucea at which the local chamber of commerce will also be present. That meeting starts at 6:00 p.m. at the Grand Palladium Hotel.

Activities in Hanover and Westmoreland will culminate in an all-day Town Hall Meeting and Consumer Day exposition at the Sean Lavery Faith Hall in Savanna-la-Mar. The day's activities start at 10:00 a.m. with the exposition by the OUR and seven of its partners. That segment will close off with an entertainment package featuring award top JCDC performing arts winners from the parish. The day will end with consumers hearing from the utilities and in turn, having their queries addressed at the Town Hall meeting.

"We have decided to take the OUR to the people and concurrently bring them in direct contact with their utility providers because we want every consumer to be knowledgeable of their rights and use information to protect themselves when things go wrong, as they will at times," said Mrs. Bennett Marsh.

She added, "we are aware of a perception by some consumers that because the OUR is funded by the utilities that it regulates that the agency is controlled by them but nothing is further from the truth. On the contrary, while it is recognized that the rights of utility companies must also be safeguarded, as regulator, the OUR is committed to protecting the rights of consumers and this is why we are inviting everyone to come out these Town Hall meetings and the several other activities being staged in the parishes over the next ten months."

The next series of activities will be staged in St. Elizabeth during the month of April.

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For further information,

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