
Office of Utilities Regulation

Consumer Affairs Unit

Quarterly Performance Report

2020 July - September

Publication Date: 2020 December 29



36 Trafalgar Road, Kingston 10

Consumer Affairs Unit Quarterly Performance Report

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The Role and Objectives of the OUR

The Office of Utilities Regulation Act of 1995 established the Office of Utilities Regulation (**OUR**) as a body corporate. Under the Act, the OUR is charged with the responsibility of regulating the provision of utility services in the electricity, telecommunications and water and sewerage sectors. The objectives are to:

- Ensure that consumers of utility services enjoy an acceptable quality of service at a reasonable cost;
- Establish and maintain transparent, consistent and objective rules for the regulation of utility service providers;
- Promote the long-term efficient provision of utility services for national development consistent with Government policy;
- Provide an avenue of appeal for consumers who have grievances with the utility service providers;
- Work with other related agencies in the promotion of a sustainable environment; and, act independently and impartially.

The Consumer and Public Affairs Department

Through the Consumer and Public Affairs (CPA) Department, the OUR discharges its mandate to protect utility consumers. The Consumer Affairs Unit, the Public Affairs Unit (PAU) and the OUR Information Centre (OURIC) all comprise the CPA Department. This Department is the section of the OUR that directly interfaces with utility consumers and one of its main responsibilities is to investigate appeals of decisions made by utility service providers brought by aggrieved consumers.

The Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU)

Among other things, the CAU receives, records and processes consumer complaints and appeals, monitors trends in consumer complaints and provides the Office with advice on measures to be taken to improve consumers' welfare.

The CAU uses as a primary input to its policy development and advice to the Office, the results of analyses of the complaints received from customers about the services provided by the companies. Feedback from consumers at town meetings, public fora and the media are also key sources for opinions and activities of utility services.

A consumer survey which seeks consumer feedback on a range of consumer issues is conducted every 18 - 24 months. Additionally, a public education programme is pursued which includes organizing consultations with stakeholders on pertinent regulatory matters.

The PAU manages the public education programme, media relations and the website while the Information Centre (OURIC), *inter alia*, provides information in keeping with the requirements of the Access to Information Act. The OUR, through the CPA department also funds the activities of the Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) which was established to operate as an independent advocacy group providing critical feedback and support for consumer issues.

The Intent and Purpose of the Quarterly Performance Report

The Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) is prepared by the Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) and provides the public with information and analysis about the contacts received from utility providers. The information includes: the number of customer contacts received over the review period; JPS and NWC's performance against the Guaranteed Standards; utilities' responsiveness to our appeals process; and the performance of the Unit against the Appeals Process timelines.

The QPR is intended to be a fair, reasonable and transparent report of the above-mentioned activities. The statistics for each reporting period is gathered from our Customer Information Database and is reflective of the contacts received from utility consumers island-wide. These contacts are received via various channels, namely: letters, telephone, walk-in, e-mails, fax and social media.

Methods of Calculation

The methods of calculation used include: summation, quarterly and year-on-year comparisons. The resort latterly to normalize the numbers of contacts by expressing this as per the customer base reflects our allowance for fair comparisons. Consequently, the report cites the number of contacts per 100,000 of the service provider's customer base. Even so, it is recognized that the telecommunications sector with its heterogeneous customer bases presents a peculiarity for comparison with the water and electricity utilities that have more homogenous customer bases. The information should be interpreted as a sample, or statistical representation of the intake to the Unit.

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Executive Summary

The CAU received 1,820 contacts for the 2020 July - September quarter, which represents an 8% decrease over the preceding period. The data saw decreases in some categories of customer contact, compared to the preceding period, with the most significant relating to: *Billing Matters* (-18%), *Terms and Conditions of Service* (-33%) and *Rebate/Refund* (-24%).

However, the data also indicated that there was a significant increase, of 163%, in customer contacts relating to *Service Connection*. This increase suggests that customers' application for new service connections were not completed within the stipulated timelines established by either the Guaranteed Standards or the service providers.

There were 50 service connection contacts for the current reporting period compared to 19 for the preceding quarter. Please see the breakdown in the table below.

Table 1: Service Connection Contacts by Providers

Utility Provider	2020 July – September	2020 April -June
JPS	12	7
NWC	6	2
Digicel	3	1
Cable & Wireless	15	5
Columbus (FLOW)	13	4
Small Telecoms	1	0
Total	50	19

The following shows the distribution of contacts per service provider¹:

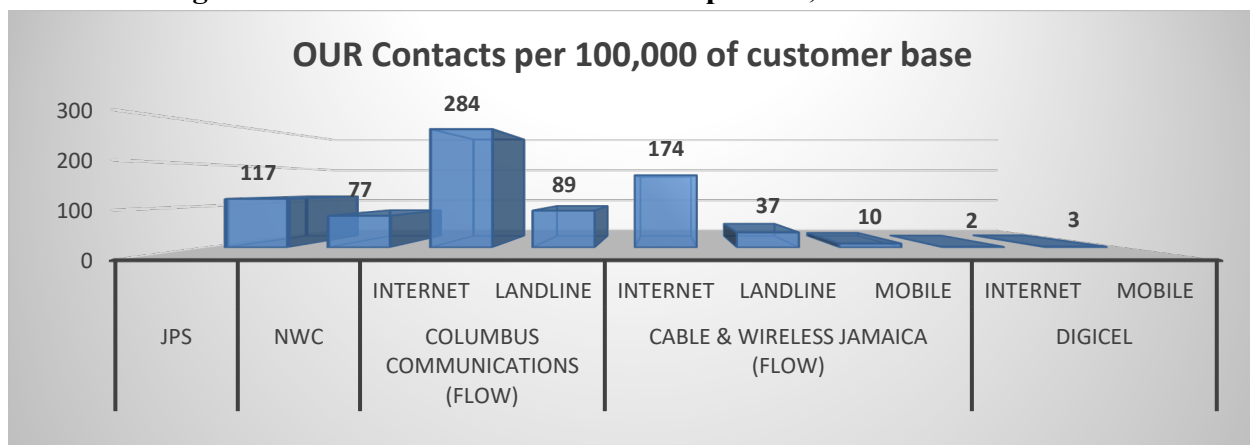
- Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) – 740 (40%)
- National Water Commission (NWC) – 367 (20%)

¹ Details on contact distribution per service provider can be seen in Table 5 on page 24.

- Cable & Wireless Jamaica Ltd. (Flow) – 301 (17%)
- Columbus Communications (Flow) – 246 (14%)
- Digicel – 76 (4%)
- Private water and/or sewerage providers CanCara Development Ltd., Dairy Springs Ltd., DEML, Drax Hall Utilities Ltd., Runaway Bay Water Company Ltd., and St. Jago Hills Development Company Ltd.; small telecommunications providers, Dekal Wireless and XtriNet and Other (Not Utility Provider Related) – 90 (5%).

While JPS at 740, accounted for the most contacts, Figure 1 shows that Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for the highest number– at 284 per 100,000 – in proportion to its internet customer base.

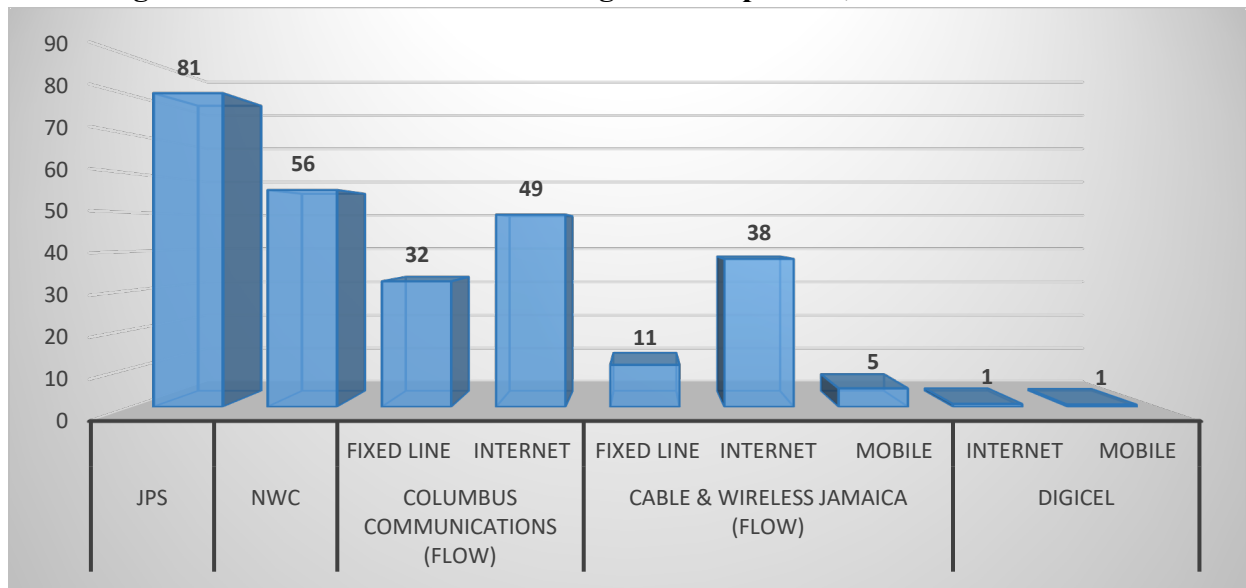
Figure 1: Distribution of OUR contacts per 100,000 of customer base



At 51%, billing matters continued to be the main reason for utility consumers contact the CAU. JPS and NWC with 498 (27%) and 265 (15%) of contacts respectively, accounted for the highest number of billing related matters.

As is shown in Figure 2, JPS at 81 accounted for the highest number of billing related contacts per 100,000 of its customer base. NWC and Columbus Communication's (Flow) internet service followed with 56 and 49 contacts respectively, per 100,000 of their customer base.

Figure 2: Distribution of OUR billing contacts per 100,000 of customer base



In keeping with the usual trend, service interruption issues, at 14% of total contacts, remained the second highest reason for customer contact to the CAU.

Chapter 1: Utilities' Responsiveness

(i) Acknowledgements

Similar to the preceding quarter, eighteen (18) new appeals were accepted for investigation for the July to September period. Of the new appeals, JPS and NWC accounted for seven (7) and eleven (11) respectively. Requests for information (case letters) were sent for all new appeals accepted.

Based on the established Service Level Agreements (SLAs), both JPS and NWC agreed to acknowledge the OUR's case letters within five (5) business days. As is shown in Table 1, both JPS and NWC improved on their performance, when compared with the preceding period, and attained perfect scores in relation to acknowledgements.

Table 2: Acknowledgement within Standard (5 business days)

<i>Quarters (2020)</i>	JPS	NWC
<i>January - March</i>	100%	100%
<i>April - June</i>	80%	71%
<i>July - September</i>	100%	100%

(ii) Response to Case Letters

Service providers are required to provide responses to our case letters within 30 business days. As is seen in Table 2, JPS provided responses to four (4), presenting 57%, of the seven (7) responses within the agreed timeline. For the NWC, ten (10) responses were due within the reporting period of which four (4), or 40%, were received within the agreed timeline.

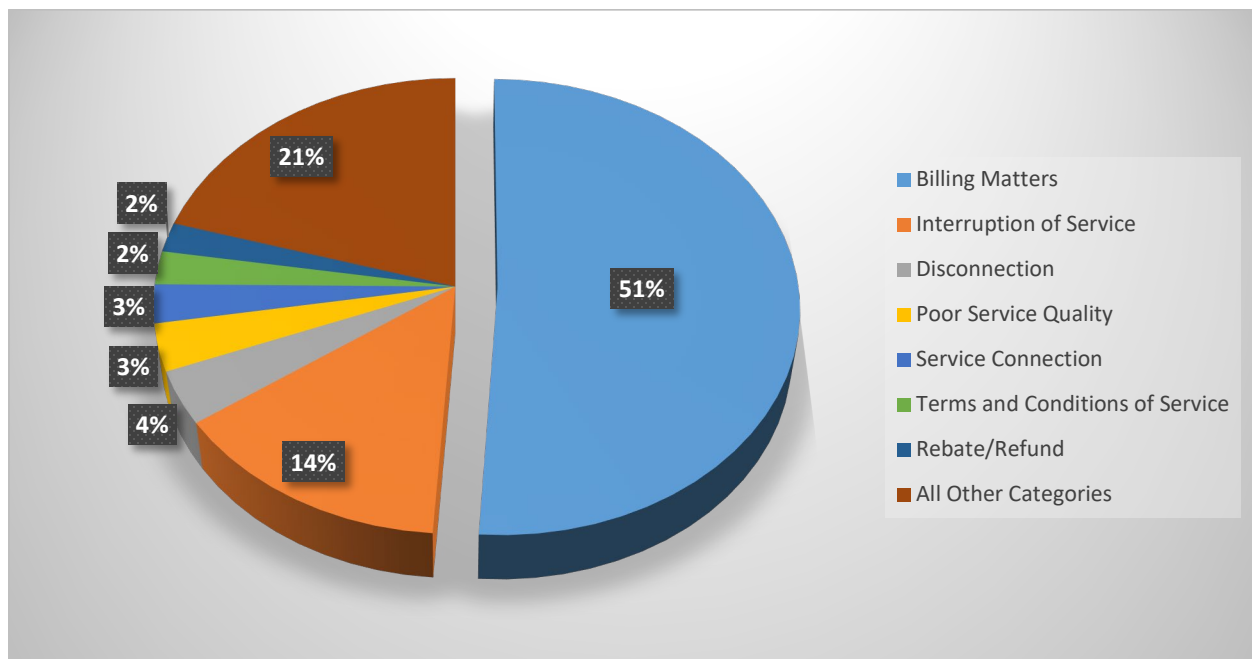
Table 3: Response to case letters within standard (30 business days)

<i>Quarters (2020)</i>	Can-Cara	JPS	NWC
<i>January – March</i>	N/A	100%	50%
<i>April - June</i>	100%	86%	100%
<i>July - September</i>	N/A	57%	40%

Chapter 2: Main Customer Concerns

The main reasons for utility customers contacting the CAU related to: billing, interruption of service, disconnection, poor service quality, service connection, rebate/refund and terms and conditions of service (Figure 3). Further details on all contacts distributed per category is provided in Table 6.

Figure 3: Main Concerns



(i) Billing

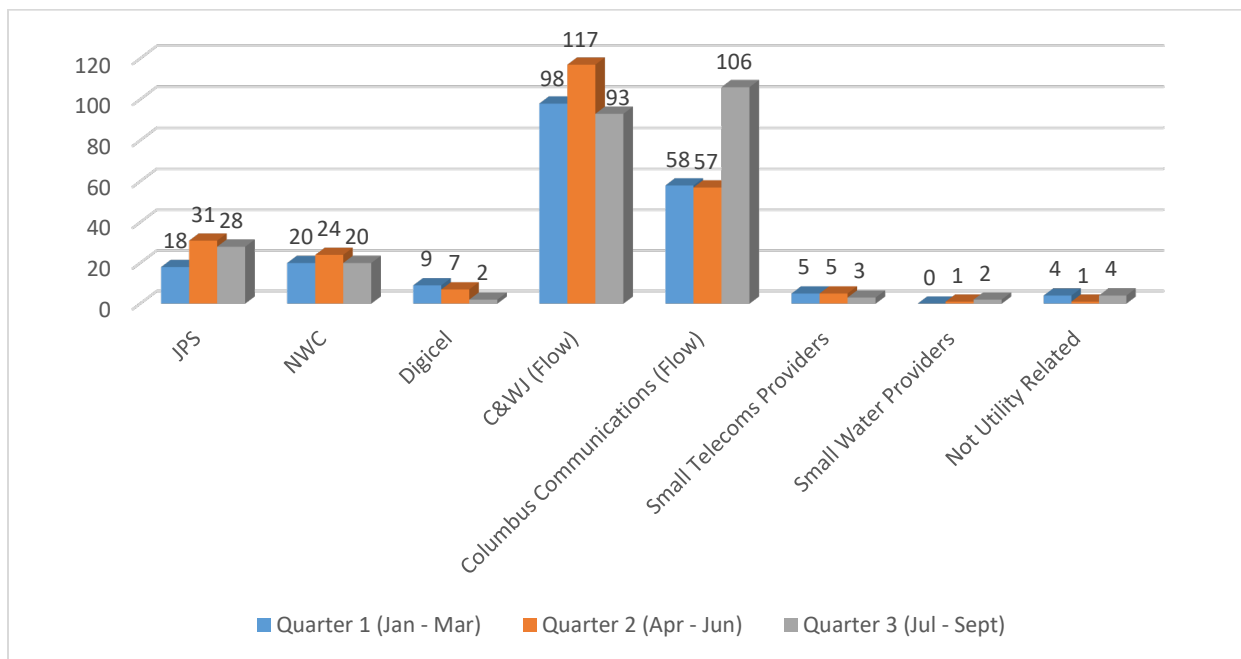
Billing matters continued to be the main reason for customer contact during the 2020 July - September quarter, accounting for 51% of total contacts received. These matters included high consumption, disputed charges, adjustments to customers' accounts, estimated billing, and billing punctuality.

JPS and NWC continued to account for the most billing contacts with 498 (27%) and 265 (15%) respectively. C&WJ (Flow) and Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for 94 (5%) and 47 (3%) respectively, while Digicel, Private Water Providers and contacts not utility related, accounted for the remaining 29 (1%).

(ii) Interruption of Service

Contacts relating to service interruption increased by two percentage points, to 14%, when compared with the preceding quarter. Columbus Communications with 106 (6%) and C&WJ (Flow) with 93 (5%) accounted for the highest number of related contacts (Figure 4). JPS accounted for 28 (2%) while NWC, Digicel, small telecommunications providers, small water providers and contacts not utility related accounted for the remaining 1%.

Figure 4: Quarterly service interruption contacts



(iii) Disconnection

Contacts relating to disconnection accounted for 4% of total contacts with JPS C&WJ and Columbus Communications accounting for 2%, 1% and 1% respectively.

(iv) Poor Service Quality

Similar to the preceding period, poor service quality accounted for 3% of total contacts with JPS, C&WJ and Columbus Communications having a share of 1%.

(v) Service Connection

Service connection accounted for 3% of total contacts with C&WJ, Columbus Communications and JPS each had an equal share of 1%.

(vi) Terms and Conditions of Service

Contacts about changes made by service providers to the Terms and Conditions of Service (Contract Terms) continued to account for 2% of contacts. Telecommunications providers C&WJ and Columbus Communications each had an equal share 1%.

(vii) Rebate/Refund

Requests for rebates/refunds realized a one percentage point decrease, to 2%, of total contacts when compared to the preceding quarter, with C&WJ and Columbus Communications having an equal share.

Chapter 3: Guaranteed Standards Performance

(i) What are the Guaranteed Standards?

The Guaranteed Standards are performance measures that guide the provision of utility services delivered by the NWC, small water providers and the JPS. If the companies fail to honour the agreement, the affected customer is entitled to compensation which is applied as a credit to their utility account.

(ii) How are customers compensated?

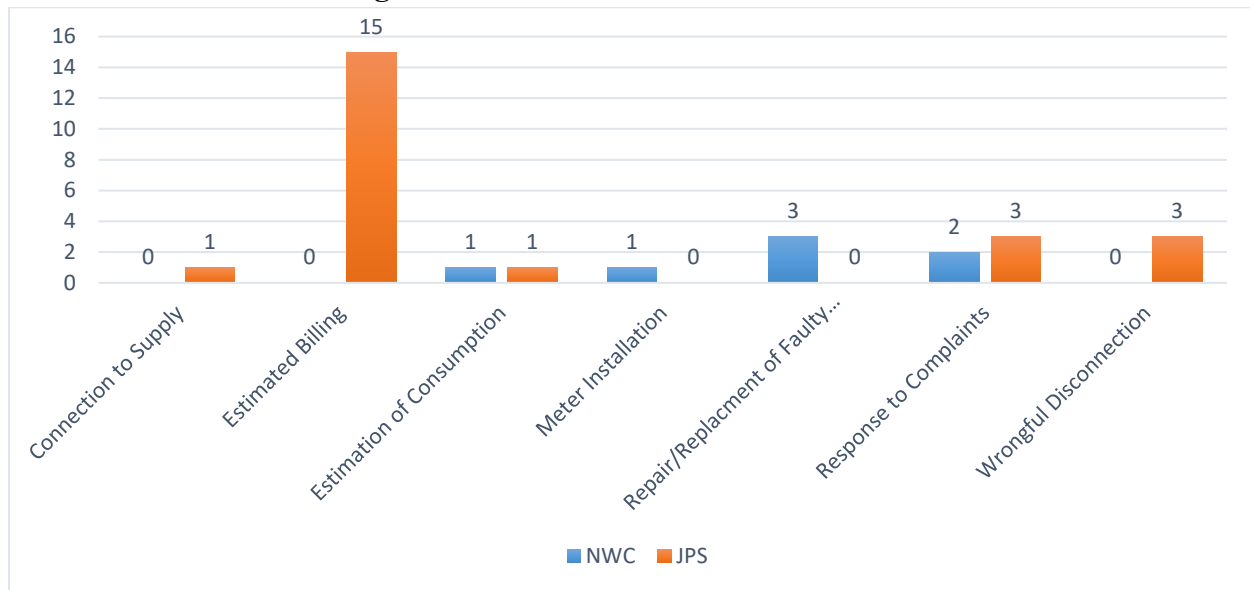
NWC: Compensation for a breach of a standard is four (4) times the applicable service charge OR six (6) times the service charge for those in the special compensation category. Where applicable, customers must submit their claims within 120 days of the breach. Breaches of individual standards will attract compensation of up to six (6) periods of non-compliance.

JPS: Residential customers: equivalent to the reconnection fee; Commercial customers: four (4) times the customer charge. Breaches of individual standards will attract compensation of up to eight (8) periods of non-compliance.

(iii) Quarterly report of breaches

Thirty (30) contacts were received from JPS and NWC customers to the OUR in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards. This represented two percent (2%) of total contacts received. JPS and NWC accounted for 23 and 7 contacts respectively.

As is seen in Figure 5, *Estimated Billing* accounted for the highest number of contacts in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards for JPS. For the NWC, *Repair/Replacement of Faulty Meter* accounted for the highest incidents in relation to alleged breaches of the Guaranteed Standards.

Figure 5: Guaranteed Standards Contacts

The Guaranteed Standards reports submitted by the JPS and NWC did not reflect the alleged incidents of breaches reported to the OUR. Accordingly, no compensatory payments were made by the Service providers in relation to the contacts received by the OUR regarding Guaranteed Standards breaches.

(iv) Utilities' performance on Guaranteed Standards

JPS²

JPS's compliance report on its Guaranteed Standards' performance indicated that 18,556 breaches were committed during the July - September quarter; representing an increase of 16% when compared with the preceding period. These breaches attracted compensatory payments of approximately \$40.2 million. However, no compensatory payments were made to customers for these breaches as JPS advised that it is awaiting the response from the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology (MSET) regarding the request to suspend the Guaranteed Standards resulting from the island being designated a disaster area due to the impact of Covid-19 since 2020 March.

² In keeping with its License provisions, JPS advised that it has submitted a request to MSET for a suspension of the Guaranteed Standards and they are awaiting a response.

Estimated Bills (which restricts JPS from sending more than two consecutive estimates without a penalty), *Reconnection* (which requires that JPS restores supply with 24 hours of payment of overdue amounts) and *Connection to Supply* (which prescribes the time within which JPS is to make a simple connection) accounted for the highest incidents of breaches. These standards accounted for approximately 99% of breaches and compensatory payments, respectively.

NWC

The NWC's Guaranteed Standards compliance report indicates that 583 breaches were committed during this quarter, which represents a 23% decrease when compared with the preceding period. These breaches had a potential pay-out of approximately \$2.2 million while actual payments amounted to approximately \$685,000 or 32% of total potential payments and were made by way of automatic credits to the affected accounts. The remaining 68% of potential payments not made, represented those breaches for which the required claim forms were not submitted for validation.

The standards with the highest incidents of breaches for the NWC were: WGS 1 – Access/Service Connection (which requires NWC to connect a new supply within 10 working days); WGS 7 – Meter Installation (which stipulates that meters should be installed within 30 working days upon request); and WGS 10a – (which restricts the NWC from sending more than 2 consecutive estimated bills, where it has access to the meter). These three standards represented 93% of total breaches and potential payments.

Chapter 4: Customer Contact Centre/Call Centre Performance Reports

In recognition of the important role of Customer Contact Centres (Call Centres) in customer service delivery, the OUR has deemed it necessary to include a report on the performance of the JPS and NWC Call Centres. Here, focus is placed on the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that indicate general customer satisfaction levels for NWC and JPS in this area.

NWC:

The NWC's Call Centre Report³ for the review period shows a decline in performance in three of the four areas examined. As is shown in Table 3, the sole improvement over the preceding quarter related to the 36 seconds reduction in the average length of calls over the preceding period. However, the *Percentage Service Level* decreased by six percentage points, which fell below the international standard of 80%; the maximum time that a customer waited in queue increased by 30 seconds; and the *Percentage of Abandon Calls* increased by four percentage points, when compared with the preceding period.

Table 4: NWC's Call Centre Performance

		Performance (2020)		
<i>KPIs</i>	KPI Definition	Jul - Sept	Apr - Jun	Jan - Mar
<i>Percentage Service Level</i>	Percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds ⁴	51%	57%	87%
<i>Maximum Delay</i>	Maximum time that caller waited in queue	0:20:00	0:19:30	0:18:45
<i>Average Length of Call (Call Handle Time)</i>	Average length of calls	0:5:25	0:06:01	0:5:57
<i>Percentage of Abandon Calls</i>	Percentage of calls not serviced	12%	8%	2%

³ The NWC advised that the Call Centre report covers the review period up to 2020 September 26 to facilitate needed changes to the operations of its Call Centre, which is being moved in-house

⁴ This represents the measure used by the NWC

JPS:

The performance of JPS's Call Centre showed mixed results. While the JPS report indicates a four-percentage point improvement, to 74%, in the percentage of call answered within 20 seconds, this fell below the international standard of 80% and JPS's performance target of 82%. Also, JPS required an additional 11 seconds on average to complete calls while the percentage of abandoned calls remained at 24%, which was outside of the set target of 8% or less during the reporting period (see Table 4).

Table 5: JPS Call Centre Performance

		Performance 2020		
<i>KPIs</i>	KPI Definition	Jul - Sept	Apr - Jun	Jan - March
<i>Service Level Answer</i>	Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds ⁵	74%	70%	88%
<i>Average Length of Call (Call Handle Time)</i>	Average length of calls ⁶	6:01	5:50	4:23
<i>Percentage of Abandon Calls</i>	Percentage of calls not serviced ⁷	24%	24%	12%

⁵ Goal of 82% set by JPS

⁶ Goal of no more than 5 minutes set by JPS

⁷ Less than or equal to 8%

Chapter 5: Notification of Planned Outages Report

As part of their agreed Quality of Service Standards, the JPS and NWC are required to submit reports relates to their performance in notifying customers within a specified timeline about planned outages. This standard is a part of the Overall Standards for JPS (EOS 1) and the performance targets for the NWC.

JPS:

Under EOS 1, JPS is required to notify customers of planned outages, allowing at least 48 hours (2 days) advance notice. JPS reported an 82.3% compliance rating for this standard, which represents a 0.7 percentage point decline over the preceding period and 17.7 percentage points short of attaining the established target of 100%.

The OUR's Electronic Media Monitoring Report for the review period included a report about service interruptions to sections of St. Catherine in August.

NWC:

The NWC performance targets provides for a 98% attainment rate for 12 hours' advance notification of planned service interruptions of a duration of no more than 4 hours. However, where a planned interruption is expected to be for more than four hours, the NWC is required to give advanced notice of at least 24 hours, at a 90% attainment rate.

Based on NWC's notifications to the public, the compliance target of 98% for 12 hours' advanced notification of planned outages of a duration of no more than 4 hours was met, as all three (3) notifications were issued within the stipulated timeline.

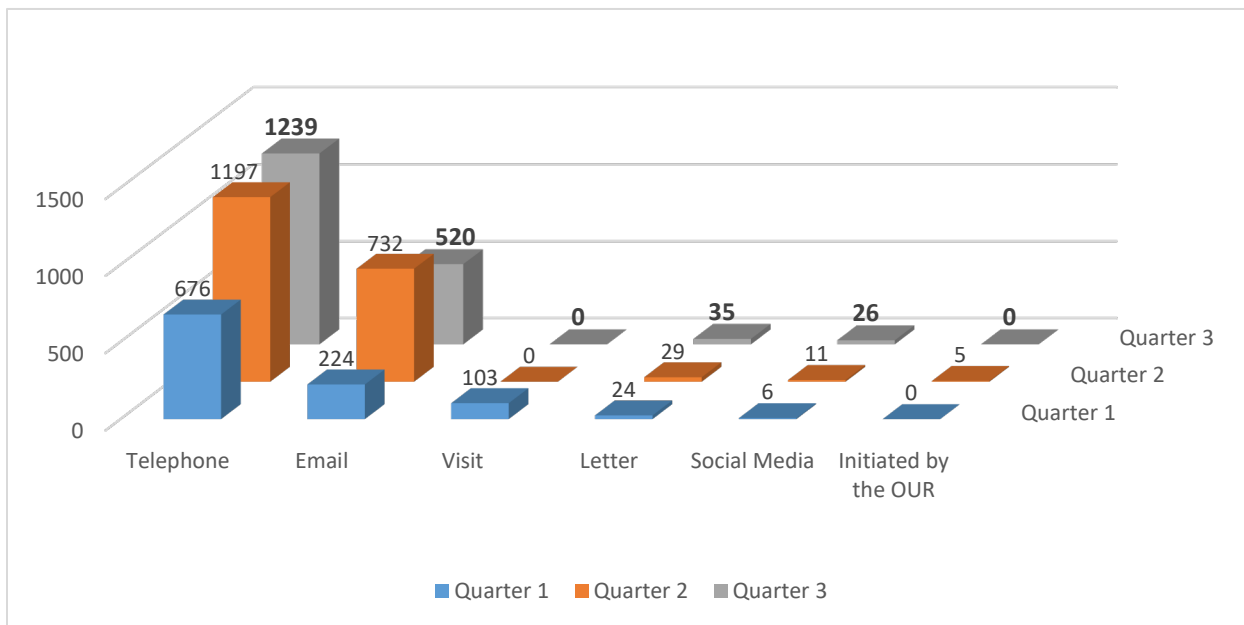
However, the NWC only attained a compliance rating of 58% to provide at least 24 hours' advance notice for disruptions of a duration greater than 4 hours. This compliance rating is twenty (20) percentage points less than that achieved in the previous period and 32 percentage points less than the established target. Of the 24 related notifications received, 14 were in compliance with the stated target.

The OUR's Electronic Media Monitoring Report for the review period advised of notifications issued by the NWC which alerted customers of scheduled service disruptions due to repairs of scheduled maintenance activities.

Chapter 6: Customer Contact Distribution

The telephone, at 68%, continued to be the most frequently used method for customers contacting the OUR. Emails followed with 29% while letters and social media contacts accounted for 2% and 1% respectively. Figure 6 provides further details.

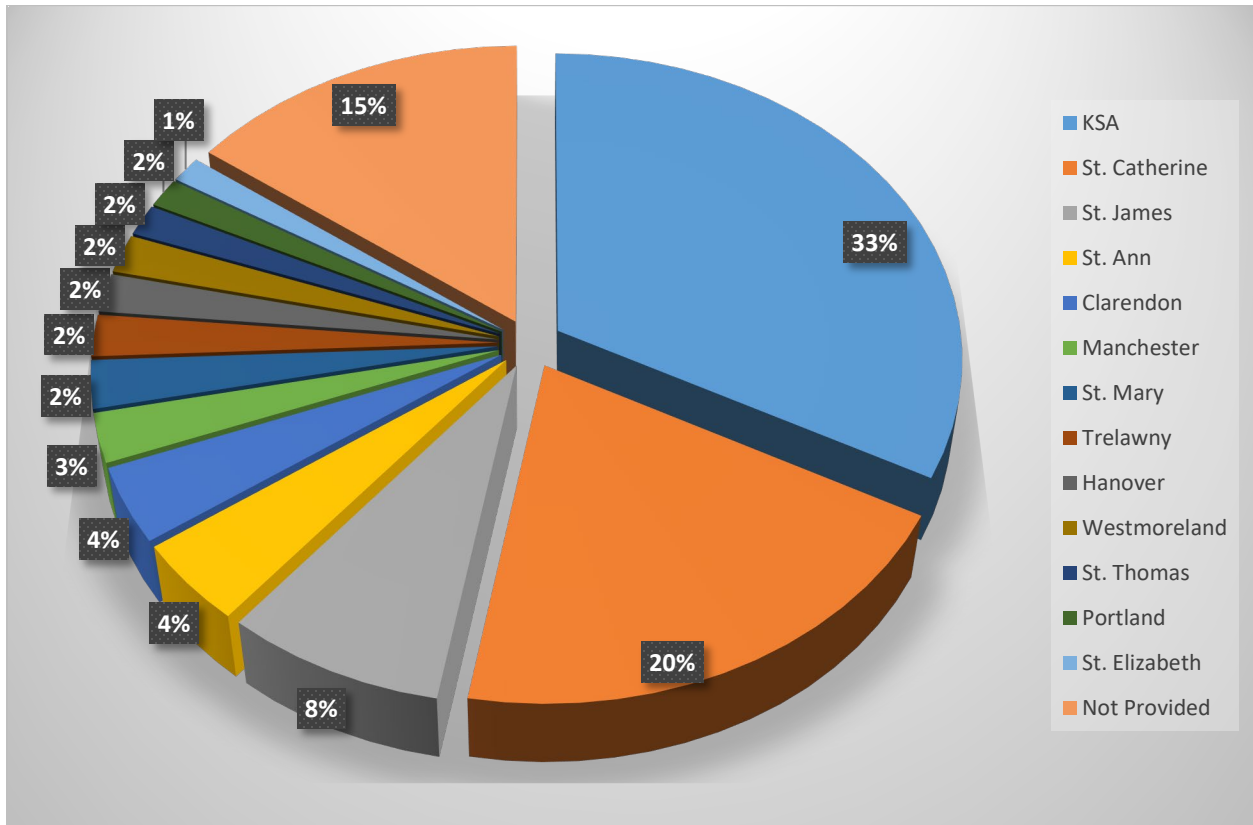
Figure 6: Methods of Contact



Geographical Distribution of Contacts

Kingston and St. Andrew, at 33%, continued to account for the highest number of total contacts. St. Catherine followed with 20% while St. James accounted for 8%. St. Ann and Clarendon each accounted for 4%. All other parishes each had a share of 3% or less. Fifteen percent (15%) of the contacts received provided no information on their location/parish or the information was not recorded. Details are provided in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Geographic Distribution of Contacts



Chapter 6: Appeals Performance

(i) Closure of Appeals⁸

Eighteen (18) appeals were closed of which 14 (77%) were resolved in favour of the service provider, two (11%) were in the customer's favour, a compromise was reached for one (6%) while the remaining one (6%) was withdrawn by the customer. Additionally, thirteen (72%) of the eighteen appeals were resolved within the established sixty-five (65) working days while the remaining 28% exceeded the established timeline.

(ii) Outstanding Appeals⁹

At the end of the review period, ten (10) appeals remained outstanding, in that they exceeded the established 65 business days for resolution. Five (5) of the outstanding appeals are awaiting OUR's action while two and three were awaiting responses from JPS and NWC respectively.

JPS accounts for seven (7) of the outstanding appeals which relate to two (2) cases of equipment damage, one (1) property damage and four (4) billing related matters. The three outstanding NWC appeals are in relation to billing matters.

Appeals Process Resolution Rate

Of the eighteen (18) new appeals that were accepted for investigation all relevant information for seven (7) were received within the established timeline; nine (9) responses were received outside of the established timelines while the timeline for the remaining two responses had not expired.

Final decisions were made and communicated to customers (by way of Final Letters), within the established 65 working days, for 12 (86%) of the new appeals for which all information was received. Further details on the CAU's performance on some key Appeals Process activity are provided in Table 9.

⁸ Breakdown of Appeals Closures can be seen in Table 7

⁹ Breakdown of Outstanding Appeals can be seen in Table 8

Chapter 7: Consumer Affairs Highlights

(i) Credits/Compensation

The sum of \$309,333.16 was secured for utility customers through the invention of CAU. Of this sum, the NWC paid out the highest share of \$290,583.12 (94%) while Columbus Communications (Flow) accounted for the remaining 4% of credits/compensation to customers.

(ii) OUR Urges Porting Vigilance of Telecommunications Customers

During the review period, the OUR launched an investigation into customers' complaints of number porting irregularities based on complaints received by its Consumer Affairs Unit and those noted in the media.

In light of the complaints received, the OUR issued a press release encouraging telecommunications customers *“to be vigilant when porting their numbers to another service provider by ensuring that operators follow the established protocols for the porting process.”*

The OUR's press release further warned telecommunications customers that any attempt from a service provider *“to initiate the porting process outside of the stated points of sale”* constitutes a breach of the provisions of the established Industry Number Portability Guidelines.

List of Tables: 2020 April - June

Table 6: Contact Activity Summary (All Utilities)

Description	JPS	NWC	C&WJ (FLOW)			Columbus Communications (Flow)		Digicel			Small Telecoms Provider	Small Water Providers	OUR/Other (Not Utility Provider Related)	Total
			Internet	Landline	Mobile	Internet	Landline	Internet	Landline	Mobile				
			A	Contacts for the Quarter										
(i) New Appeals	7	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
(ii) New Complaints	99	41	79	43	31	127	15	8	1	23	1	2	5	475
(iii) New Enquires	118	61	8	5	7	12	4	2	0	2	0	1	6	226
(iv) New Opinions	9	3	2	1	3	5	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	25
(v) New Referrals	507	251	48	35	39	80	3	9	0	29	4	0	71	1076
Total Contacts	740	367	137	84	80	224	22	20	1	55	5	3	82	1820
B	Closure/Resolution of Appeals:													
(i) Compromise	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
(ii) Resolved in Favour of the Customer	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
(iii) Resolved in Favour of Utility	8	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14
(iv) Withdrawn by Customer	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total Closures	9	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
C	Total Appeals from Previous Periods:													
	Outstanding Appeals with OUR													
(i) Undergoing Analysis/Determination	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
(ii) Outstanding Appeals with Utility (Awaiting Responses)	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total Outstanding Appeals	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10

Table 7: Distribution of Contacts by Categories

Complaint Category	Service Providers									Total
	JPS	NWC	Digicel	C&WJ (FLOW)	Columbus Communications (Flow)	Small Telecoms Providers (Dekal Wireless, Noble Wi-Fi, XtriNet)	Small Water/Sewerage Providers (include: RBWC, St. Jago Hills)	OUR/Other (not utility related)		
Billing Matters	498	265	21	94	47	0	1	4	930	
Broken Main	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	
Customer Service	2	0	0	4	8	0	0	1	15	
Defective Street Lights	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	
Disconnection	31	7	0	16	15	0	0	0	69	
Equipment Damage	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	26	
Guaranteed Standards	23	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	30	
Guaranteed Standards Query	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	
Health & Safety	15	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	19	
Illegal Connections	12	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	13	
Interruption of Service	28	20	2	93	106	3	2	4	258	
Irregular Supply	1	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	
Leak at Meter	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	
Metering	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	
Mobile Credit Depletion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Number Portability	0	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	7	
Other	42	30	14	20	14	0	0	71	191	
Payment Arrangement	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	
Phone Cards	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Poor Service Quality	14	3	9	17	17	1	0	0	61	
Property Damage	5	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	8	
RAMI Service Connection & CDU	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	
Reconnection	7	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	11	
Rebate/Refund	3	1	0	14	19	0	0	1	38	
Service Connection	12	6	3	15	13	1	0	0	50	
Terms and Condition of Service	2	1	20	18	2	0	0	0	43	
Unable to get through to Provider	4	3	1	4	3	0	0	0	15	
Unavailability of Service - No Facility	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	
Total	740	367	76	301	246	5	3	82	1820	

Table 8: Distribution of Closed Appeals by Utilities

Appeal Category	Service Providers		Total
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	6	9	15
Equipment Damage	2	0	2
Property Damage	1	0	1
Total	9	9	18

Table 9: Distribution of Appeals (Outstanding)

Appeal Category	Service Providers		Total
	JPS	NWC	
Billing Matters	4	3	7
Equipment Damage	2	0	2
Property Damage	1	0	1
Total	7	3	10

Table 10: CAU's Performance on Service Standards (New Appeals)

Activity	Service Standards	% Compliance	Comment
Acknowledgement of Appeals	Within 2 business days of receipt of customer's correspondence	83%	Fifteen (15) of the 18 new appeals were acknowledged within the established timeline.
Case Letters/ Other Utility Contact	Within 5 business days of acknowledging customer's correspondence	89%	Sixteen (16) of 18 Case Letters were dispatched within the stipulated 5 business days.
Correspondence Copied to Customer	Customer is to be copied on all correspondence submitted to the utilities pertaining to their complaint	100%	
Final Response	Within the established timeline of receipt of all necessary information from relevant parties	86%	Final responses were prepared and dispatched within the established timeline for 12 new appeals for which all relevant information was received.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Definition Of Terms Used In Documenting Customer Contacts

Appeal:	Any contact in which the utility company has completed an investigation into a customer's complaint, the customer remains dissatisfied with the outcome and writes to the OUR asking for an independent investigation of the matter.
Complaint:	Any contact from consumers who feel that particular action(s) of a utility service provider might have been in breach of their Terms and Conditions or might have been unfair to them. The OUR provides investigation for complaints as is necessary. Acceptance of complaints does not require submission of a written response from the service provider.
Customer Contact:	Any contact made to the OUR to register an appeal, inquiry, opinion, etc. Contact can be made through the telephone, post, electronic channels (emails, website, and Facebook page) and visits.
Enquiry:	Any contact requiring verification/confirmation of information relating to the OUR, a utility service, policy and/or practice, etc.
Equipment Damage:	Damage caused to customers' equipment as a result of alleged action or inaction of their service provider.
Interruption of Service:	Where no service is provided, usually for an extended period.
Irregular supply:	Where service is not provided regularly and in keeping with the Terms and Conditions of Service/Contract.
Opinion:	Any contact expressing a view about the actions, practice or terms of service, etc. of a utility company or the OUR.
Referral:	Any contact advised by the OUR to consult the relevant utility company because the complainant had not initially utilized or exhausted the complaint procedure within the relevant utility company.
Refund:	Amounts credited to customers' accounts for breaches of the service provider's Terms and Conditions of Service/Contract

Resolution: Where the OUR communicates its decision on customers' appeals and complaints

Resolution Rate: The percentage of resolutions that are made within the established timelines

Appendix 2: Statement on Confidentiality of Telecommunications Service Provider Information

Information on the customer base of the telecommunication companies was used in some of the calculations contained in the QPR, pursuant to Section 7A of the Telecommunication Act – Amended. The referenced section states, in part:

“...the following information is not required to be regarded and dealt with as secret and confidential namely -

- (a) information that will facilitate customers in their choice of facilities or specified services and the development of the telecommunications industry; and
- (b) information relating to the –
 - (i) quality of service measurements;
 - (ii) prices charged to customers or to other licensees;
 - (iii) network coverage of licensees;
 - (iv) market share of licensees;
 - (v) volume of services of licensees however measured
 - (vi) subscriber base of licensees; and
 - (vii) capacity and usage of international submarine cables

Appendix 3: Appeals Process

The activities of utility companies are guided by “terms and conditions” within their license and/or Act. There are occasions, however, when consumers feel that particular action(s) of a utility company might have been in breach of the utility’s “terms and conditions” or might have been unfair to them. In such circumstances, the OUR is an avenue for recourse in having any such wrong investigated and addressed through our appeals process.

Prior to submitting an appeal to the OUR, consumers are expected and encouraged to first take the complaint, or issues giving rise to the complaint, up to the level of a senior officer at the respective utility company. The hearing of grievances is a consumer’s right and utilities are obliged to review such matters with the aim of having the issue addressed or clarified.

Appendix 4: CAU Internal Performance Standards

Process Timeline for General Appeals

<u>Description</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
Acknowledging correspondence & Assigning Appeal	2 (Two) working days
Case Letter Preparation	5 (Five) working days
Receive JPS’ Response/Update	30 working days ¹⁰
Review of Provider Response & prepare Follow-Up (F/U) Case letter or issue Directive (where necessary)	10 working days
Receive response to F/U Case Letter	5 (Five) working days
Review Response to F/U Case Letter	5 (Five) working days ¹¹
Final Letter Preparation (Draft)	5 (Five) working days
Supervisor’s Review of Final Letter	2 (Two) working days
Dispatch Final Letter	1 working day
Total	65 working days

¹⁰ Where, based on exceptional circumstances, JPS requires additional time to provide the response to a Case Letter, same is to be communicated to the OUR within five (5) working days of the Case Letter date. The rationale for the additional time must be outlined in the request. The OUR will provide a response to the request within two (2) working days.

¹¹ Subsequent to the review of the providers’ response to OUR’s Case Letter, Follow-up Case Letter or Directive issued, the appeal may be escalated to the Supervisor, Manager or Director and would then be treated as a Special Appeal.

Special Appeals

There are appeals that, based on the nature of the issue, may require expertise and/or resources that do not reside in the designated units of the OUR and JPS to effectively resolve same. Accordingly, the classification of “Special Appeals” was revised to provide additional time to both parties to complete their investigation of these matters.

Where necessary, an additional fifteen (15) working days is allotted to JPS to respond to Follow-up Case Letters sent by the OUR. These appeals will thereafter be reclassified as Special Appeals. The OUR has also reduced its consultation time to review Special Appeals from twenty (20) to fifteen (15) working days. Accordingly, the total time allotted to complete the review of a Special Appeal for JPS is at 95 working days

Recommended Service Levels

1. JPS is expected to respond to **OUR’s Case Letters** regarding customer’s appeals within **thirty (30) working days** of receipt. The company is also expected to acknowledge receipt of our Case Letters within five (5) working days of receipt.
2. JPS is expected to respond to the OUR’s follow-up case letter within FIVE (5) working days of receipt for General appeals. However, where necessary, JPS shall notify the OUR within FIVE (5) working days of receipt of the Follow-up Case letter that additional time is required to provide the response. Such Appeals shall then be reclassified as a Special Appeal with the JPS being allotted a total of twenty (20) working days to provide the response, from the date of the Follow-up Case Letter.
3. The OUR’s Final Letter to the customer is to be dispatched within **eighteen (18) working days** of receipt of utilities’ response (where no Follow-up Case Letter was sent). JPS will be provided with a copy of the Final Letter.
4. The OUR is expected to complete investigations of JPS appeals within the following timelines:
 - **Sixty-five (65) working days** for GENERAL APPEALS (which do not require external consultation)
 - **Ninety-five (95) working days** for Equipment Damage Appeals (which do not require external consultation)
5. The Utility company is to extend the hold on the customer’s account for THIRTY **(30) days** subsequent to receiving OUR’s final response to allow the customer to make arrangements for the balances that are outstanding and/or give the customer time to appeal to the Director – Consumer & Public Affairs.

Appendix 5: Process Timelines for NWC Appeals

<u>Description</u>	<u>Timelines</u>
Acknowledging correspondence & Assigning Appeal	2 working days
Case Letter Preparation	5 working days

Receive NWC's Response/Update	30 working days
Review of Provider Response & prepare Follow-Up (F/U) Case letter or issue Directive (where necessary)	10 working days
Receive response to F/U Case Letter	5 working days
Review Response to F/U Case Letter	5 working days ¹²
Final Letter Preparation (Draft)	5 working days
Supervisor's Review of Final Letter	2 working days
Dispatch Final Letter	1 working day
Total	65 working days

Special Appeals

There are appeals that, based on the nature of the issue, may require expertise and/or resources that do not reside in the designated units of the OUR and NWC to effectively resolve same. Accordingly, the classification of "Special Appeals" was revised to provide additional time to both parties to complete their investigation of these matters.

Where necessary, an additional five (5) working days is allotted to the NWC to respond to Follow-up Case Letters sent by the OUR. These appeals will thereafter be reclassified as Special Appeals. The OUR has also reduced its time to review Special Appeal from twenty (20) to fifteen (15) working days; thereby retaining the completion timeline for Special Appeals at 85 working days.

Other Appeals Activities:

Monthly reports detailing the appeals for which the responses are outstanding will be generated and sent to the NWC. Where the responses/updates are not received within ten (10) working days of submission of the report, the matter will be escalated to the Vice President – Investment and Performance Monitoring, NWC, for action. Similarly, the CAU will provide NWC with a monthly update on appeals for which our responses are outstanding.

As a consequence, the following are the proposed Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to which the utility companies will be accountable. It is being recommended that the following be agreed upon by all parties and published:

¹² Subsequent to the review of the providers' response to OUR's Case Letter, Follow-up Case Letter or Directive issued, the appeal may be escalated to the Supervisor, Manager or Director and would then be treated as a Special Appeal.

Recommended Service Levels

NWC is expected to respond to **OUR's Case Letters** regarding customer's appeals within **thirty (30) working days** of receipt. The Commission is also expected to acknowledge receipt of our Case Letters within five (5) working days.

NWC is expected to respond to the **OUR's follow-up case letter** within **FIVE (5) working days of receipt for General appeals**. However, where necessary, the NWC shall notify the OUR within **FIVE (5) working days of receipt of the Follow-up Case letter that additional time is required to provide the response**. Such Appeals shall then be reclassified as a Special Appeal with the NWC being allotted a total of **ten (10) working days to provide the response, from the date of the Follow-up Case Letter**.

The OUR's Final Letter to the customer is to be dispatched within **EIGHTEEN (18) working days** of receipt of the NWC's response (where no Follow-up Case Letter was sent). The NWC will be provided with a copy of the Final Letter.

The OUR is expected to complete investigations of NWC appeals within the following timelines:

- **SIXTY-FIVE (65) working days** for GENERAL APPEALS (which do not require external consultation)
- **EIGHTY-FIVE (85) working days** for SPECIAL APPEALS (Appeals which require external consultation)

The Utility company is to extend the hold on the customer's account for thirty **(30) days** subsequent to receiving OUR's final response to allow the customer to make arrangements for the balances that are outstanding and/or give the customer time to appeal to the Director – Consumer & Public Affairs.

Appendix 6: List of Acronyms

Can Cara	-	Can Cara Development Limited (Water & Sewerage Provider)
CPA	-	Consumer and Public Affairs Department (OUR)
CAU	-	Consumer Affairs Unit (OUR)
DEML	-	Dynamic Environmental Management Limited (Water and Sewerage Provider)
Dekal	-	Dekal Wireless Ltd. (Telecommunications Provider)
Flow Service	-	Columbus Communications Jamaica Ltd. (Flow) - Telecommunication Provider
FLOW	-	Cable & Wireless Jamaica Ltd. (C&WJ) Flow
JPS	-	Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (Electricity Provider)
KSA	-	Kingston & St. Andrew
NWC	-	National Water Commission (Water & Sewerage Provider)
OUR	-	Office of Utilities Regulation
OURIC	-	Office of Utilities Regulation Information Centre
The Office	-	Comprises 6 members and is headed by a Chairman with the Director General serving as an <i>ex officio</i> member