

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Decline in Complaints to the OUR in 2021 Q3**

**(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2021 December 23):** The Quarterly Performance Report (QPR) put out by the Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) for the 2021 July – 2021 September quarter shows a twenty-three percent (23%) decline in the number of complaints received by the OUR.

Data contained in the report reveal that the most significant decreases were seen in the complaint categories of Disconnection (-42%), Billing Matters (-33%) and Terms and Conditions of Service (-14%). The complaint category of Interruption of Service saw the most significant increase of 63% over the preceding period.

Of the 1,173 complaints received during the period, Billing matters, at 43% of the number of contacts received, continued to be the main reason utility consumers contacted the OUR's Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU). The Jamaica Public Service Company Ltd. (JPS) and the National Water Commission (NWC) with 253 (22%) and 181 (15%) of contacts respectively, accounted for the highest number of billing-related matters. These matters included high consumption, disputed charges, adjustments to customers' accounts and estimated billing.

Service interruption contacts increased by eleven-percentage points, to 20% of contacts received, when compared with the preceding quarter. Columbus Communications Ltd. (Flow) and JPS with 96 (8%) and 93 (8%) respectively, accounted for the highest number of related contacts. Cable and Wireless Jamaica Limited accounted for 85 (3%) contacts with Digicel Jamaica Ltd. and NWC sharing the remaining 1%.

During the quarter, JPS and NWC reported contrasting performances against the Guaranteed Standards; the former recording an increase in complaints and the latter, a decline.

JPS's compliance report on its Guaranteed Standards performance indicated that 14,960 breaches were committed during the 2021 July – 2021 September quarter, representing a 13% increase compared with the preceding period. These breaches attracted compensatory payments of approximately \$33.85 million. However, no compensatory payments were made for the breaches as during the period, JPS was still awaiting the Minister of Science, Energy and Technology's decision on its request regarding force majeure relief from the Guaranteed Standards. The request was made on the grounds that the island had been designated a disaster area due to the impact of Covid-19 since 2020 March. The Minister, in 2021 October, made a final decision on the matter which resulted in the resumption of payments in 2021 November for breaches of the JPS Guaranteed Standards.

Estimated Bills (which restricts JPS from sending more than two consecutive estimates without a penalty), Reconnection (which requires that JPS restores supply within 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 99% of the standards which were breached by JPS. /MORE

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The NWC's Guaranteed Standards compliance report for the review period indicates that the number of breaches committed decreased by 15%, to 1,031, when compared with the preceding period. These breaches had a potential pay-out of approximately \$4.09 million but actual payments amounted to approximately \$643,606.96 or 16% of total potential payments. This largely comprised automatic credits to the affected accounts. The remaining 84% 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 Complaint Investigations (NWC is required to complete investigations and provide an update within 30 working days of complaint); Access/Service Connection (NWC is to connect a new supply within 10 working days); Meter Repair/Replacement (Defective meters are to be verified, repaired/replaced within 20 working days); and Meter Reading (NWC should send no more than two consecutive estimates without penalty). These four (4) standards represented 90% of total breaches and 89% of total potential payments.

The Quarterly Performance Report for 2021 July – 2021 September can be found on the OUR's website: [www.our.org.jm](http://www.our.org.jm).

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