

**Consumer Advisory
Committee on Utilities**



"The Consumers' Voice on Utilities"

The Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) was formed in 2001 when the members of the then Office agreed to the principle of establishing a Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) to overcome any deficiencies in the **Office of Utilities Regulation's (OUR)** relationship with consumers and to develop a channel which would allow it to be fully aware of the views and opinions of the utilities' consumers. It was re-constituted in 2004.

The **OUR's** Director General and other Executives attend meetings on request. The prescribed term of the Committee is two years and members are eligible for re-appointment. In order to ensure continuity in the work of the Committee, the members are appointed to serve for periods that would allow for half the members to retire each year.

Since its inception, the **CACU** has become the voice of the consumer in utility regulation. The Committee consistently advocates for intelligent and smart utility policies in order to ensure and safeguard utility consumers' rights, build consumer confidence in their utilities' services and create safe, reliable and affordable utility services which contribute to sustainable development in Jamaica.

**Consumer Advisory
Committee on Utilities**



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***Join us for a meeting and share your voice.
Contact us for meeting dates.***

WHY THE CACU?

The **OUR** is not a consumer advocacy organization. However, the **OUR 'Act'** recognizes that consumers' interests need special consideration. The individual consumer does not have the resources to adequately match those of the utility providers. The providers have an immediate remedy in disputes with the consumer, the power to disconnect and withdraw service.

The responsibilities of the **OUR** in its consideration of consumers' interests, must be more than dispute resolution. The **OUR** is of the view that in order to satisfy its duties under the Act, it is obliged to:

- a) take the consumers' views into account in all issues that will affect them;
- b) be mindful of the needs of specific interest groups and sectors for example, persons with disabilities;
- c) establish mechanisms where issues can be heard and consensus reached, thereby providing the **OUR** with essential feedback on consumers' concerns; and
- d) anticipate consumers' attitudes and expectations towards the utility providers.

The Consumer Advisory Committee on Utilities (CACU) was established to provide the **OUR** with a forum through which it can receive consumers' views on broad regulatory issues as well as their perspective on issues affecting the relationships between the utility providers and consumers.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE CACU?

- a) The **CACU** advises the **OUR** on consumers' priorities in relation to the quality of service provided by the utility service providers;
- b) reports to the **OUR** on any matter relating to the provision of utility services that appear to the Committee to affect the interests of customers or potential customers of the service providers;
- c) considers issues referred to it by the **OUR** and provides timely feedback, opinions and recommendations as appropriate;
- d) acts as a gauge of public opinion and advises the **OUR** on issues that will impact on the **OUR's** relationship with the public;

- e) acts as an advisory body to the **OUR** and brings issues of public concern to the **OUR** as well as offer solutions to specific issues; and
- f) advises the **OUR** on and the development of regulatory policies, particularly in those areas that are of direct consumer concern.

Throughout its seventeen years of existence, the **CACU** has responded to **OUR's** consultative documents, has had frequent interactions with the utility providers on consumer issues, participated in and responded to tariff reviews, engaged with local media and interacted with the respective Ministries at the policy level.

COMPOSITION OF THE CACU

The **CACU** is organized to accommodate up to 14 persons, although the Chairman, in consultation with the Director General, may constitute a Committee with fewer persons. Membership is drawn from: consumer groups, the business sector, Consumer Affairs Commission (CAC) and, the general public.

