

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Significant Increase in Customer Complaints to OUR in 2020 April-June Quarter

(KINGSTON, Jamaica; 2020 September 20): The Office of Utilities Regulation (OUR) saw a significant jump in the number of utility customer complaints during the 2020 April-June quarter.

The figures are contained in the OUR’s just released Quarterly Performance Report for the period.

The number of contacts to the OUR’s Consumer Affairs Unit (CAU) for the quarter was 1,974, an increase of 91% over the preceding quarter’s 1,033.

Complaints pertaining to the Jamaica Public Service Company Limited (JPS), recorded the largest increase, at 196%, moving from 303 in the January to March quarter to 898 in April to June, as indicated in the table below.

Utility Provider	Contacts Received 2020 Jan-March	Contact Received 2020 April-June	% Variance
JPS	303	898	196%
NWC	234	375	60%
Cable & Wireless Jamaica (FLOW)	268	357	33%
Columbus Communication (FLOW)	115	181	57%
Digicel	71	70	-1%
Small Water Providers and Others	42	93	121%
TOTAL	1,033	1,974	91%

The data indicated that the most significant increases comparing the current and preceding quarters related to Billing Matters (168%), Disconnection (125%), and Terms and Conditions of Service (113%).

Billing matters, which registered the highest increase in customer contact to the OUR, was the main reason for utility consumers contacting the CAU. JPS and NWC with 669 (34%) and 284 (14%) of contacts respectively, accounted for the highest number of billing related matters.

Service interruption issues, at 12% of total contacts, remained the second highest reason for customer contact to the CAU.

The JPS and NWC also recorded increases in the number of breaches of their Guaranteed Standards during the quarter.

JPS’s compliance report on its Guaranteed Standards’ performance indicated that 15,969 breaches were committed during the current period, which represents an increase of 22%. These breaches attracted potential compensatory payments of approximately \$35 million.

Significant Increase in Customer Complaints .../2

However, no compensation was made to their customers as the JPS advised that it is still awaiting the response from the Ministry of Science, Energy and Technology regarding its request to suspend the Guaranteed Standards due to the effects on its operations of the Covid-19 pandemic and measures instituted by the GOJ under the Disaster Risk Management Act to contain contagion.

Estimated bills, connections to supply, and reconnections accounted for the highest incidents of breaches for JPS. These breaches of the Guaranteed Standards accounted for approximately 99% of breaches and compensatory payments, respectively.

The NWC's Guaranteed Standards compliance report indicates that 753 breaches were committed during the current quarter, which represents a 35% increase. These breaches had a potential pay-out of approximately \$2.6 million while actual payments were approximately \$216,000. The actual payments represented 8% of total potential payments and were made by way of automatic credits to the affected accounts. The remaining 92% 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 those relating to estimated bills, meter installation, and complaints investigation, which represented 78% of total breaches.

In addition to sums paid out for breaches of the Guaranteed Standards, just over \$862,000 was secured for utility customers through the intervention of OUR's Consumer Affairs Unit. Of this sum, the NWC paid out the highest share of \$817,000 (95%), JPS and C&WJ each account for 2% while Columbus Communications (FLOW) accounted for the remaining 1% of credits/compensation to customers.

The OUR's Quarterly Performance Report for 2020 April – June can be found on its website: www.our.org.jm.

-30-

Contact: Elizabeth Bennett Marsh – Public Education Specialist: 876-968-6053