

# Number Portability is Here!

It's been a long time coming, but wireless phone customers in Canada can *finally* change their service provider and keep their current number. In 2005, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) decided on March 14, 2007 as the deadline for wireless number portability (WNP) to come into effect in Canada.

"The arrival of WNP in the Canadian market provides users of telecommunications services with greater convenience and flexibility," said Richard French, Vice-Chairman, Telecommunications, of the CRTC. "The Commission would like to acknowledge the industry's commitment of time and effort to successfully meet the March 14 implementation date."

Marc Choma of the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association told Marketnews that the industry is confident the process will run smoothly. "It should take 2.5 hours to port a number from one wireless carrier to another, and approximately 2.5 business days to port a wireless number to a wireline, or vice versa," he said.

In areas where number portability is currently available (which Choma says covers approx. 70 per cent of the Canadian population), customers can transfer their current phone number between cell phone service providers, and between wireline and cell phone service providers. It's worth noting, however, that certain handsets (or features on them) may not function on another cell phone carrier's network because of the changes in network technologies. Monthly usages rate plans also vary amongst providers.

Customers still bound by contract will likely have to pay a pretty penny to cancel prior to the end date, should they wish to do so; but month-to-month subscribers will surely be shopping around for better deals. Many have opted not to switch carriers in the past simply because they don't want to change a number that's long been associated with them, and that has been given out to a large group of contacts. Also in the past, the "best" signing deals have typically been offered to *new* customers, leaving the existing ones to feel like they're getting the short end of the stick.

With the power now shifting to the non-contract users, and those about to come off contract, we'll find out just how many people are indeed happy with their current wireless service. It's sure to cause a shake-up in the cell phone industry.

Reference:

<http://cwta.ca/>

<http://www.wirelessnumberportability.ca/>