



TELECOMMUNICATIONS - PREPARING FOR CHOICE

Barbados will soon be moving from a situation where one telecommunication company provides residential, business, international and mobile telephone service. The consumer will have choice. Government is encouraging and seeking to attract other companies to operate in Barbados so that consumers can access a greater variety of services.

This change will not happen overnight but will take place in steps over the coming year. To facilitate this change the licensing arrangements of Cable & Wireless Barbados (Ltd.) will be changed and they will no longer have the exclusive right to provide residential, business, international and mobile telephone service.

Mobile Service

- **Choice of mobile operator** – Three more companies are expected to start providing cellular phone service within the next few months.

Residential Service

In applying for telephone service Cable & Wireless may only be responsible for bringing the phone line to a point outside of your house. You would then be able to choose to install and connect your house wiring yourself or select who does it on your behalf. In addition you will be able to purchase your telephone set from any authorised supplier.

- **Choice of the technician that installs the telephone wiring in your home** Currently Cable & Wireless provides the telephone set and installs the inside house wiring. This wiring is then connected to the Cable & Wireless' telephone network. With the removal of Cable & Wireless exclusive licence, other technicians will be licensed to do this installation. The Telecommunications Unit will identify the criteria that will apply for persons seeking to be registered as licensed technicians. Consumers would be responsible for ensuring that their wiring is done by a licensed technician.
- **Choice of telephone set.** While subscribers should only use telephone equipment that has been approved by the Telecommunications Unit, they will be able to choose the type of set. Retailers should only offer for sale equipment that has met the required standards. These standards will be developed and available

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from the Telecommunication Unit and will be available to consumers at the Fair Trading Commission and the Telecommunications Unit. In order to avoid any damage to the public telecommunications network or injury to consumers it is very important that consumers only use approved equipment.

Choice of repair technician

Cable & Wireless will gradually relinquish its responsibility for repairs of faults that are due to equipment or wiring within the customer's premises. Cable & Wireless will maintain responsibility for the network faults that are under their jurisdiction.

Customers would have to:

- check if their phone set is faulty
- hire a technician to check and repair wiring within the home or office.

So before the you make that call to Cable & Wireless you, consumers would have a measure of responsibility to determine and correct any faults within their premises.

International Service

- **Choice between dialling an international call directly or through an alternative operator.**

The final phase of liberalisation of the telecommunication market allows the public to choose between alternative service providers for their international calls. One of the responsibilities of the Fair Trading Commission is to cultivate, promote and encourage a competitive environment to ensure that rates are fair, reasonable and non-discriminatory.

What should the Consumer look for when making these choices?

- **prices/contracts - are they based on individual services or combinations of services;**
- **billing arrangements;**
- **customer service;**
- **variety of services being offered; and**
- **conditions and terms of service.**

The operator that offers the cheapest price may not provide the variety or standard of service that you require. Alternatively you may prefer to use the services of an operator that offers a more relaxed billing arrangement. Each consumer should seek to make full enquiries and obtain as much information about the service before making their choice.

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