



# Do Not Call List

*By Stephen Lautens*

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Two and a half years after the CRTC started looking into setting it up, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission announced this week that the much anticipated do-not-call list to screen out telemarketers will finally start September 30th.

Actually it will start on October 31<sup>st</sup>, because you won't be able to get on the do-not-call website until September 30<sup>th</sup> to register your phone number.

And actually, in case you think this is going to make a big and welcome difference to your life, registering on the "do-not-call" list doesn't mean you won't keep getting calls. That's because the people who can still call you even if you have registered on the "do-not-call" list are charities, political parties, pollsters, newspapers seeking subscriptions and companies with which customers have "existing business relationships".

That pretty much covers everyone I get unwanted calls from now. Except for the occasional wrong number, I can't really think of any other unsolicited sales calls I get.

The CRTC seems to have forgotten (or more likely had its teeth pulled by a lobby of the big telemarketers) that the people left on the list are big and sophisticated and responsible for 95% of the calls we get at dinnertime. The bulk of charitable fundraising has been subcontracted to professional telemarketers who buy, sell and trade lists of people to call. Of course charities need money – I've raised money for them myself – but if the government was really interested in helping them, it would change the pathetic tax deduction you get in the country for donations and then they wouldn't have to call while you're in the shower.

I can live with political parties calling me, since we only hear from them once every four years when they want our vote. Besides, it's our sacred democratic right and duty to be informed, even if we exercise it less frequently than that barbell set in the crawlspace.

The tricky one on the list of people who are still allowed to bug you are the ones you have an "existing business relationship" with. Technically I guess that includes all the stores you shop at, all the utilities you use, all your banks, credit cards, insurance companies and anywhere else you have spent a dollar and left a phone number. Of course Bell Canada was named last year as operator of the "do-not-call" registry under a five-year contract, and most of us have an "existing business relationship" with them.

If they really wanted to give the “do-not-call” registry some teeth, they’d add a few more categories to the list of people who are not allowed to call you at home. What about an ex-girlfriends registry, or “distant relatives who are coming to town and need a place to stay” registry?

Finally, to put your number on the list, starting September 30th you have to go to one of those wonderfully memorable Government of Canada websites: [www.LNNTTE-DNCL.gc.ca](http://www.LNNTTE-DNCL.gc.ca).

I don’t know why the government has such trouble with this Internet thing. Other people go to get great lengths to get short, easy to remember web domain names. It’s not that they are unavailable. In fact, for the grand total of twelve dollars I just today registered the web domain [www.DontCallList.ca](http://www.DontCallList.ca). Go have a look if you don’t believe me.

As a public service, I’ll link it to the impossible to remember government “do-not-call” website, or even offer to sell it to the CRTC at cost – provided they don’t call me.

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