



## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release

The Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority (URCA) is pleased to announce that the Communications Act 2009 (Comms Act), which gives URCA full powers of regulation and of oversight of the electronic communications sector in The Bahamas, comes into force on 1 September 2009.

This date signals the start of the transition to a new regulatory regime. Greater competition will be introduced in the electronic communications sector, to the benefit of the economy and of all persons in The Bahamas.

During the transition, URCA is required to act to ensure maximum continuity. For this purpose, the functions and powers previously vested in the Public Utilities Commission and the Television Regulatory Authority are transferred to URCA by law.

Firms and individuals authorised to provide services and to operate networks under the Telecommunications Act and the Broadcasting Act will be able to apply for a licence under the Comms Act. URCA is also contact all existing licensees and will run a press campaign to inform the public.

To facilitate a smooth transition to the new licensing regime as possible, a number of new documents were published on 1 September 2009 and are available at URCA's website ([www.urcabahamas.bs](http://www.urcabahamas.bs)). These include:

- Preliminary Determination covering several Class Operating and Spectrum licences, Exemptions, and Types of Fees
- Individual Operating and Spectrum licences
- Draft Class Operating and Spectrum licences
- Licensing Guidelines
- Fee schedule
- Radio Spectrum Statement (Existing Allocation and Assignment)
- Various forms - Full Details Form and Notice of Objection Form for the transition, and an Application Form for a licence.

The new regime encourages participation by all - the website will also give you the opportunity to learn more about the new regime with updates on Competition Policy, Consultation results and determinations and latest news of the regime.

Until new URCA regulatory measures are adopted, all existing regulatory measures adopted by the Public Utilities Commission and the Television Regulatory Authority continue in force to the extent that they do not conflict with provisions of the Comms Act, the Utilities Regulation & Competition Authority Act, 2009; the Utilities Tribunal Act, 2009 and any new regulatory measures adopted under these Acts.

The Chief Executive Officer of URCA, Mr. Michael Symonette said that “URCA is obligated to regulate the electronic communications sector in such a way as to ensure that new investments are attracted to the sector, competition between the operators is sustainable, fair and balanced, and consumers are provided with choice and high quality products and services at reasonable/affordable prices. Given the right conditions, operators and investors will bring much needed innovation to the communications market in terms of new products and services, and so create new opportunities for individuals who would wish to participate in this sector of the economy”.

He added that “at all times, URCA will be vigilant to ensure that the interest of consumers are protected, and would therefore urge consumers to avail themselves of the consumer protection services established for them as outlined on URCA’s website.”

This new regime and the Comms Act coming into force for the electronic communications sector is the beginning of a new day for all persons in The Bahamas. At URCA we will be doing our best to minimise disruptions.

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