



AUTO ATTENDANT / RESEARCH & PRACTICAL GUIDANCE

Port a Number to Another City or Province: Rate Centres

Get a business phone number with a simple auto attendant menu from Auto Attendant. A caller picks who they need and the call rings that person's own mobile, so nobody on your team has to publish a personal number.

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Short answer

Usually yes if you are moving across town, often no if a regular landline is moving to another city's exchange, and sometimes yes if the number ends up on a wireless or internet-based (VoIP) service that will take it.

A North American phone number is tied to a place called a rate centre (US: rate center). Porting rules in both countries were written around switching carriers while staying in that place. Moving the number to a new place is treated differently, depending on the type of service.

Your move	Landline to landline	To or from a wireless or VoIP provider
Same exchange	Normally portable	Normally portable
Different exchange, same metro	Often refused (Metro Vancouver is the exception)	Possible; number keeps its original exchange
Another province or state	Often refused	Possible with some providers; ask first

The rest of this article gives the rule numbers, as of October 2026. It is educational, not legal advice.

Why a phone number is tied to a place

A ten-digit North American number has an area code (NPA), a three-digit central office code (NXX), and four line digits. Each NXX belongs to one exchange and one rate centre. The CRTC notes that wireless carriers "use North American Numbering Plan (NANP) geographic-based numbers that are associated with a specific rate centre that uniquely locates a telephone exchange" ([CRTC Telecom Decision 2005-72, para. 43](#)). US rules work the same way: number blocks are allocated "separately within a rate center" ([47 CFR 52.20](#)).

The rate centre decides how calls are billed: "all calls to a number associated with an exchange are deemed to have terminated at the rate centre of the exchange," including wireless numbers ([CRTC 2005-72, para. 43](#)). So "normally, wireline-based carriers require that a customer be assigned a number associated with the exchange in which they reside, primarily for rating purposes" ([CRTC Telecom Decision 2019-23, para. 1](#)).

Three terms to keep apart:

- **Number portability:** keeping your number "at the same location" when you switch carriers ([47 CFR 52.21\(m\)](#)).
- **Location portability:** keeping your number "when moving from one physical location to another" ([47 CFR 52.21\(k\)](#)).
- **Exchange or rate centre:** the area the number belongs to. It is often smaller than the area code.

The rules let you change carriers. They do not give you a general right to change places.

Moving across town

Inside the same exchange, moving is a non-event for the number. The FCC's consumer guide: "If you're switching service providers and remaining in the same geographic area, you can keep your existing phone number," and this works "between wireline, IP and wireless providers" ([FCC, Porting: Keeping Your Phone Number When You Change Providers](#)). In Canada, porting in is mandatory when "the new service location is within the home exchange" ([CRTC 2016-345, para. 26](#)).

The trap: "across town" is not always the same exchange. In the Canadian exchange list, Montreal is one exchange area in the 263/438/514 complex, while Laval-Ouest and Laval-Est are separate exchange areas in the 354/450/579 complex ([CNAC Canadian Exchange Area Listing](#)). A short drive can cross an exchange boundary. Check before you sign a lease.

Moving to another city or area code

The FCC's guide: "If you are moving to a new geographic area, you may not be able to keep your current phone number when changing providers" ([FCC porting guide](#)). Note "may not": it depends on what kind of service the number lands on.

A traditional landline carrier has to serve you from the number's exchange, which usually is not possible once you are somewhere else. Landline-to-landline moves across exchanges usually end in a new number.

Wireless and VoIP services reach your phone wherever it is, so the provider can keep the number assigned to its original rate centre while you use it elsewhere. In the Metro Vancouver proceeding, TELUS said customers "may transfer their number to an access-independent VoIP service provider or a wireless carrier and continue to use that number in the new location," and the CRTC noted the number "retains the characteristics and location of its original exchange, and not those of the customer's new location" ([CRTC 2016-345, para. 7 and footnote 4](#)).

That matters for callers. Because calls are rated to the original rate centre ([CRTC 2005-72, para. 43](#)), if you move from Ottawa to Toronto and keep an Ottawa number, Ottawa callers still dial a local number, but Toronto landline callers may pay long-distance, depending on their own plan. Decide which customers matter most.

How wireless and VoIP numbers behave differently

United States

The FCC's porting-interval order, adopted May 13, 2009, restates intermodal rules set in 2003 ([FCC 09-41, footnote 2](#)):

- **Landline to wireless:** landline carriers must complete the port only where the wireless carrier's "coverage area" overlaps the location where the number is provisioned, and the wireless carrier keeps "the number's original rate center designation following the port."
- **Wireless to landline:** carriers "are not required to complete wireless-to-wireline ports where the location of the wireline facilities serving the customer requesting the port is not in the rate center where the wireless number is assigned."

The order says that second question "remains pending before the Commission" ([FCC 09-41, footnotes 2 and 34](#)). As of October 2026 no later rule has settled it: the FCC's rules codify only the landline-to-wireless side ([47 CFR 52.23\(h\)](#)), and the FCC's nationwide number portability proceeding has so far only removed some technical obstacles ([83 FR 42045, 2018](#)) without requiring ports outside the rate center. So treat a landline carrier's refusal of an out-of-area number as normal, and ask before you order.

Canada

The CRTC set the Canadian rules in Telecom Decision 2005-72 (20 December 2005) ([CRTC 2005-72](#)) and restated them in 2016 ([CRTC 2016-345, para. 3](#)):

Port direction	Rule in Canada
Wireless to wireless	Permitted "regardless of a subscriber's physical location or billing address," if the number keeps its original exchange designation for rating
Landline to wireless	Permitted if the number keeps its original exchange/rate centre designation
Wireless to landline	Landline carrier may accept or deny when the customer is outside the number's exchange
Into a VoIP provider	Numbers from inside or outside the provider's territory "could be ported in at the provider's discretion"; VoIP providers must still port out (Telecom Decision 2008-11, as summarized in CRTC 2016-345, para. 25)

Two takeaways:

1. A number on a wireless or VoIP service can follow you, but a later move back to a landline in a different exchange can be refused. Consumer groups described this one-way trap to the CRTC ([CRTC 2016-346, para. 4](#)).
2. "Discretion" means a VoIP provider can say no, and it needs coverage in the number's rate centre. Twilio, for example, says that "in rare cases, Twilio may not have rate-center (geographic) coverage for particular phone numbers" ([Twilio, Canada porting guidelines](#)). That is one provider's statement, not a rule.

Canada: exchange boundaries and the Metro Vancouver zone

On 26 August 2016, the CRTC approved a special location porting zone across 17 Metro Vancouver exchanges so "residential and business subscribers" can keep their numbers "when moving to a new address within this extended area" ([CRTC 2016-345](#)). The exchanges: Bowen Island, Cloverdale, Fort Langley, Haney, Ladner, Langley, New Westminster, Newton, North Vancouver, Pitt Meadows, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Richmond, Vancouver, West Vancouver, Whalley and White Rock ([CRTC 2016-345, footnote 1](#)).

How the zone works ([CRTC 2016-345, para. 37](#)):

- Carriers must **port out** numbers within the zone.
- Each landline and wireless carrier decides whether to **port in** a number for a new address outside the home exchange. Inside the home exchange, porting in stays mandatory.
- Carriers may assign new numbers anywhere in the zone.

The numbering guideline was updated for the zone in Telecom Decision 2019-23 (29 January 2019), which noted the zone "had no impact on calling rates" ([CRTC 2019-23](#)).

The same day it approved Vancouver, the CRTC refused to widen portability elsewhere: "it would not be appropriate to expand location portability in Canada, aside from in the Metro Vancouver area" ([CRTC Telecom Decision 2016-346](#)). The large incumbents said they had no other qualifying groups of exchanges and were not planning applications ([CRTC 2016-346, para. 15](#)). Outside Metro Vancouver, assume the exchange boundary applies to landlines.

How to check your number's rate centre

Canada

1. On the CNAC CO Code Status page, open your area code's table. It lists every NXX with its exchange area, province and the carrier it was assigned to ([CNAC CO Code Status](#)). Find the three digits after your area code.
2. Find that exchange in the CNAC Canadian Exchange Area Listing, which shows the rate centre name and a "Portable" indicator ([CNAC Canadian Exchange Area Listing](#)). In the file published 28 October 2026, 151 of 2,996 exchange areas were marked not portable.
3. Search the town of your new address the same way and compare.

CNAC's own caveats: the data is "derived from Canadian service providers' tariff documents," CNAC "makes no claim as to its current accuracy," and the tariff wins if they disagree ([CNAC Canadian Exchange Area Listing](#)). The CO code table also shows the original carrier, not necessarily who serves a ported number today. Treat both as a first check and confirm with the gaining provider.

United States

We did not verify a public lookup tool for this article. Ask your current carrier for the rate center on your account, then ask the gaining provider, in writing, whether it can port that rate center to your new address.

Cross-border and province changes

Another province. Canadian rules are about exchanges, not provinces. A move from Ontario to Alberta is a move outside the number's exchange: a wireless carrier can take the number regardless of where you live, a landline carrier can refuse, and a VoIP provider decides at its discretion ([CRTC 2016-345, paras. 3 and 25](#)). If it works, the number still belongs to the old exchange for rating.

Another state. US porting is defined around staying "at the same location," and landline-to-wireless ports keep the original rate center ([47 CFR 52.21](#); [FCC 09-41](#)). The same logic applies.

US to Canada or Canada to US. The rules above are national: FCC rules in the US, CRTC decisions in Canada. This article does not cover cross-border moves. If a provider offers one, get the details in writing before you cancel anything.

Toll-free numbers are the exception. Under US rules, "the toll free subscriber's specific geographic location has no bearing on what toll free number it can obtain" ([47 CFR 52.101\(f\)](#)). They move between providers through a different process; see our [toll-free numbers guide](#).

Workarounds when a number cannot move

Option	How it works	Watch out for
Port to a wireless or VoIP provider covering the old rate centre	Number stays in its original exchange; calls ring your phones wherever you are	Provider must accept the rate centre; callers near your new office may pay long-distance
Keep the old line and forward it	Number stays with the current carrier, forwarded to a new local number; some customers do this when they cannot port (CRTC 2016-345, para. 28)	Two bills; forwarding charges vary by carrier
Get a new local number	Clean start in the new area	Update every listing; keep the old number answering with a message for a while
Publish a toll-free number	Not tied to a rate centre	Some callers prefer a local number

For a new number, a short recorded message on the old one helps; our [moved or new number template](#) has wording you can adapt.

Pre-move checklist

1. List every number you need to keep, with its carrier and service type (landline, wireless, VoIP).
2. Look up each number's exchange or rate centre, and the exchange for the new address.
3. Same exchange: proceed as a normal port. Different exchange: ask the gaining provider, in writing, whether it will port the number to your new service address.
4. Get the exact account name, account number, PIN and service address on file from your current carrier. Twilio, for example, requires the LOA to "show your actual Canadian service address" matching the current provider's records ([Twilio, Canada porting guidelines](#)).

5. Do not cancel early. The FCC: "Do not terminate your service with your existing company before initiating new service with another company" ([FCC porting guide](#)).
6. Plan for timing; see [how long number porting takes](#).
7. If the answer is no, pick a workaround before moving day.

FAQ

Does my area code have to match my new location? No rule requires your business to be in the number's area code. What matters is whether the carrier you want will take a number from that rate centre. In Canada, wireless carriers may port regardless of your location ([CRTC 2016-345, para. 3](#)); landline carriers generally need you in the exchange.

Will moving offices change my number? Not within the same exchange, or if the number sits on a wireless or VoIP service that keeps it. A landline moving to a different exchange usually cannot follow you, except inside the Metro Vancouver zone.

Can I port my number to another province? Sometimes. A wireless carrier can accept it, a VoIP provider may, and a landline carrier in the new province can refuse ([CRTC 2016-345, paras. 3 and 25](#)).

Auto Attendant (\$29 USD per line per month) accepts US and Canadian numbers by port: you sign the authorization online, Canadian ports are handled by the team, and there is no charge until the number has moved ([how porting works](#)).

Source links

Links cited in this article, in order of first appearance. Full addresses are provided for readers using extracted text.

1. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2005/dt2005-72.htm>
2. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-52/subpart-C/section-52.20>
3. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2019/2019-23.htm>
4. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-52/subpart-C/section-52.21>
5. https://www.fcc.gov/sites/default/files/porting_-_keeping_your_phone_number_when_you_change_providers.pdf
6. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-345.htm>
7. https://cnac.ca/reference_data/canadian_exchange_area_listing.htm
8. https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-09-41A1_Rcd.pdf
9. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-52/subpart-C/section-52.23>
10. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/08/20/2018-17843/nationwide-number-portability-numbering-policies-for-modern-communications>
11. <https://crtc.gc.ca/eng/archive/2016/2016-346.htm>
12. <https://static1.twilio.com/guidelines/ca/porting>
13. https://cnac.ca/co_codes/co_code_status.htm
14. <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-47/chapter-I/subchapter-B/part-52/subpart-D/section-52.101>

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About Auto Attendant

Auto Attendant gives a small business one phone number and a recorded menu that sends each caller to the right person. The call rings the mobile that person already carries, using their normal dialler and their normal mobile plan. Pricing is a single flat monthly fee for the whole company rather than a charge for each user, and there is no app, desk phone or hardware to install.

One number, one menu, the phones you already own

A caller dials the business number, hears a short greeting and chooses an option. Each option can ring one mobile, ring several at once so whoever is free answers first, or try people one after another in a set order. There is no limit on how many people sit on the receiving end, because nobody is billed per seat. Setup is done by the owner in a few minutes: pick a number, write the greeting, and point each option at a mobile.

What it deliberately is not

An auto attendant routes a call; it does not answer one. Nobody at Auto Attendant speaks to callers, and no AI stands in for a receptionist. A business that wants its calls handled, messages taken and appointments booked wants an answering service, which is a different product at a different price. A business that needs call recording, queues, agent dashboards or CRM integration wants a contact centre platform. Auto Attendant is for the case where the call should simply reach the right pocket.

Keeping personal numbers off the internet

The business number is the only number a caller ever sees. Personal mobile numbers are never displayed and never given out, which is what lets an owner put a number on a website, an invoice, a van or a Google Business Profile without handing a personal line to everyone who finds it. An existing advertised number can be ported across and kept, and the old line keeps working while the port is in progress.

Work with Auto Attendant

Visit [Auto Attendant](#) to see [how it works](#), [how it compares](#) to a personal mobile, Google Voice and a full phone platform, and the current [pricing](#).

Telephone number portability, emergency calling and caller-ID rules differ by country and change over time. Articles published here describe general practice and cite primary regulator and carrier sources; they are not a guarantee of any timeline, and they are not legal or regulatory advice for a specific business.

Website: <https://autoattendant.io>

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