



## **TELUS business solutions unit going beyond phone and wireless**

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MONTREAL \_ **TELUS** Corp. (TSX:T) is instantly recognizable for its huge cellphone network promoted with cute fish and cuddly monkey logos, but it's not so well known that Canada's No. 2 telecom company wants to make its mark with business customers in key markets such as health care and banks.

The Vancouver-based firm has targeted energy, financial services and the public sector as key markets for its network and services that go far beyond the wireless phone.

"Our view is that the Canadian market, the domestic market, has a tremendous amount of potential," Joe Natale, president of **TELUS** Business Solutions, said in an interview with The Canadian Press.

**TELUS**'s Toronto-based business unit is using the company's network, technology and recent acquisitions such as Emergis to grow into everything from managing health-care records electronically, to mortgage applications and web conferencing.

Its client list already includes the Ontario and British Columbia governments, the federal government and the City of Montreal.

In Ontario, **TELUS**'s business unit provides IT security for the Ontario government, and the company has won a contract with the federal government to provide its wireless services, including mobile phones. And it's the network provider for the Department of National Defence not just in Canada, but globally, Natale said.

"As much as we've grown substantially across the country, there's still more to go," he said.

"When we feel that we've reached a point of steady-state penetration with our services and capabilities, then we will take a more aggressive stance outside Canada."

"It's not in the next year, but it's certainly in the next five to 10 years I think we will be looking more aggressively on that front."

Before 2000, **TELUS** was a telephone company based in Western Canada with not much of a presence in Eastern Canada. The **TELUS** Business Solutions unit now has more than 10,000 employees in Ontario and Quebec and 300,000 business customers nationally.

Analyst Troy Crandall said most telecoms are already providing a wider variety of services through their networks aimed at attracting more diversified business and helping those customers cut costs.

"Ultimately, I think that's what governments or even businesses want," said Crandall of MacDougall, MacDougall & MacTier in Montreal.

"They don't want to have to go to three or four providers just to get this one thing done. They want to go to one place and say, 'Do it all for me.'"

Natale said that **TELUS** decided in 2000 that it would focus on the coming "data explosion" and stayed away from the trend that saw other telecommunications companies buying stakes in media outlets.

"And that message eight years ago was looked at as not very exciting," Natale said.

But Natale said he believes it was the right way to go, especially with the power of the Internet.

“It’s becoming increasingly more difficult to draw a line between communications and information technology.”

**TELUS** has made 20 acquisitions in the last seven or eight years, Natale said.

He considers the recent acquisition of Emergis, a former BCE subsidiary, as significant to his business unit.

“Their strength in health care is terrific. We were already doing very well in health care. When you couple the two of us together we’ve become quite formidable on that front.”

However, Crandall said also **TELUS** needs to better communicate what its plans are for Emergis.

“I think probably one of the weaknesses of **TELUS** is communicating to the investment community actually what kind of potential is available here,” he said.

Emergis is also using technology for so-called electronic mortgages where paper is eliminated in the transactions between banks and real-estate lawyers or notaries in B.C. and Quebec.

Health care is a subject that is dear to Natale. He believes electronic health records will eventually replace paper records.

“It will come. It has to. There’s no choice. The problems of health care cannot be solved without taking a radical step in managing information,” he said.

He added he finds it’s “unbelievable in this day of technology” that doctors scribble prescriptions on piece of papers taken pharmacies by patients.