

No more landlines?

By Jasen Obermeyer

It's no secret the major innovations that cell phones have on society. They help connect us faster, can text instead of call, use the Internet, and take photos, and plenty more (than my standard Sony Ericsson.)

Of course there are changes both good and bad created, whether you think so or not. When walking around, do you see a telephone booth anymore? I'm sure you can just count how many are left, whether it's in Town, the province, or heck, even the country. There's the issue of being connected but disconnected at the same time with texting, though that's a topic for another time.

One thing cell phones are certainly doing is replacing landline phones. Of course the generations since Canada's Alexander Graham Bell was awarded the first U.S. patent for the invention of the telephone in 1876 easily remember them, but what about today's generation? I'm sure if you ask a kid if there is a landline in their home, they'll either respond with ?no? or ?what's that??

In a recent study in the United States conducted by the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention, it finds a majority of American households are now ?cell phone only.? The study found that back in 2004, 90 per cent of households owned a landline, but now, just over 10 years later, it's decreased to 46 per cent. Now more than half of households only own a cell phone.

Here in Canada, an article published in the Toronto Star said that, according to the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, more Canadian households subscribed exclusively mobile wireless services (20 per cent) than to landline services (14 per cent).

In the next few years, landlines will most likely become a thing of the past, or certainly obsolete. The landlines attached to the wall with the cord are now almost an antique.

Most people only have cell phones because it's cheaper, especially for the younger adults. Those who do have landlines and cell phones generally have just one landline, because it comes with the package for satellite and Internet. And when you're away from your house, and someone contacts your landline and leaves a message, possibly an important one, you might be away for a considerable period of time, so that cell phone does come in handy for emergency contact.

But maybe there are benefits to having just one landline. What happens when the power goes off? Those wireless landlines are no longer effective (yes, one more reason not to have them.) But those cell phones don't last forever, and once the battery dies out, you're screwed.

During that infamous Christmas blizzard in 2013, my family and I were without power for five days, and by the second, our cell phones had died. But we used a wired landline to keep in contact with family and friends, as well as Hydro One. Even just keeping that landline tucked away in storage, it's always reliable to bring it out when those cell phones die out.

Reception? Well of course landlines are better, you have a direct line of access, and when those bars don't show on your cell phone, or you're in a dead zone, what are you going to do?

Remember phone books? Some of those are still around, but are much thinner (which is fine, given the weight of those big older ones.) But maybe soon we'll see a phone book for just cell phones, or landlines for businesses, or the more likely, no more phone books at all.

Having the best of both worlds isn't an easy option for most people, but if you can afford it, have that wired landline, just in case of anything. Sure, cell phones are cheaper, keep you in communication constantly, but isn't reliability better?