

DATE: AUGUST 7, 2003

- DIVISION TO: DIRECTOR, COMMISSION OF THE CLERK 8 ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES (BAYÓ)
- DIVISION OF COMPETITIVE MARKETS & ENFORCEMENT FROM: (CURRY BUYSDKS BUDOR OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL (ROJAS)
- RE: DOCKET NO. 030410-TI - COMPLIANCE INVESTIGATION OF RAVEN COMMUNICATIONS, INC. FOR APPARENT VIOLATION OF SECTIONS 364.02 AND 364.04, FLORIDA STATUTES.
- AGENDA: 08/19/03 - REGULAR AGENDA - PROPOSED AGENCY ACTION -INTERESTED PERSONS MAY PARTICIPATE

CRITICAL DATES: NONE

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS: NONE

FILE NAME AND LOCATION: S:\PSC\GCL\WP\030410.RCM

#### CASE BACKGROUND

- January 31, 2003 Staff received a complaint regarding a prepaid phone card. The prepaid calling services provider listed on the phone card was Raven Communications, Inc. (Raven). Staff determined that Raven had not obtained a certificate of public convenience and necessity (certificate). At that time, Commission rules required that intrastate interexchange telecommunications companies (IXCs) providing services within the state obtain a certificate.
- mailed a certified letter February 18, 2003 Staff (Attachment A) to Raven to request that the company investigate the complaint and to notify the company of its

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**FPSC-COMMISSION CLERK** 

requirement to obtain a certificate. A response to this letter was due by March 5, 2003. According to the certified mail return receipt (Attachment B), the company received the letter on February 24, 2003.

- March 14, 2003 Staff received a letter of response (Attachment C) from Mr. Hector Duval, President of Raven, stating that the complaint had been resolved, and that the company's IXC certificate application had been mailed to the Commission on March 6, 2003.
- March 31, 2003 Staff mailed a second certified letter (Attachment D) to Raven to notify the company that the Commission had not received the company's IXC certificate application. This letter was also sent via facsimile. According to the facsimile Transmission Verification Report provided in Attachment E, the fax was transmitted successfully. Raven was required to submit the IXC certificate application by April 18, 2003.
- April 28, 2003 Staff opened this docket to address Raven's apparent violation of Sections 364.02 and 364.04, Florida Statutes.
- May 16, 2003 Second certified letter sent to Raven was returned to staff unclaimed (Attachment F).

The Commission is vested with jurisdiction over this matter pursuant to Sections 364.02(13)(g), 364.04, and 364.285 Florida Statutes. Further, staff's recommended penalties are consistent with penalties imposed upon other prepaid calling service providers by the Commission in previous dockets for similar types of apparent rule violations, such as, the failure to obtain a certificate. Accordingly, staff believes the following recommendations are appropriate. DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: AUGUST 7, 2003

#### DISCUSSION OF ISSUES

**Issue 1**: Should the Commission impose a \$25,000 penalty upon Raven Communications, Inc. for its apparent violation of Sections 364.02(13) and 364.04, Florida Statutes, to be paid to the Florida Public Service Commission within fourteen calendar days after the issuance of the Consummating Order?

<u>Recommendation</u>: Yes. If Raven Communications, Inc. fails to timely protest the Commission's Order, and fails to file a tariff and provide the Commission with current contact information, the company should also be required to immediately cease and desist providing intrastate interexchange telecommunications services in Florida upon issuance of the Consummating Order until the company files a tariff and provides the Commission with current contact information. (Curry, Buys, Rojas)

#### Staff Analysis:

#### <u>Apparent Deficiency</u>

Upon receiving a complaint, staff determined that Raven was providing intrastate interexchange telecommunications services within the state. Staff then notified Raven of its requirement to obtain an IXC certificate via certified mail. Raven responded in writing, stating that the IXC certificate application was mailed to the Commission on March 6, 2003. After not receiving the application, staff sent a second letter, via certified mail and facsimile, to Raven. The letter was sent prior to the date of the passage of the Tele-Competition Innovation and Infrastructure Enhancement Act (Tele-Competition Act) and informed the company again of its requirement to obtain a certificate. Staff requested that Raven submit an IXC certificate application by April 18, 2003. Even though staff's letters addressed the company's requirement to obtain a certificate, part of the certification process included filing a tariff and providing the Commission with the company's current contact information. As of the date of filing this recommendation, Raven has not filed a tariff or provided the Commission with its current contact information, which is in apparent violation of Sections 364.02(13) and 364.04, Florida Statutes. Staff believes that the company has been adequately notified of its requirements and has been provided with sufficient time to meet those requirements.

#### Applicable Florida Statutes

On May 23, 2003, Florida state legislators passed the Tele-Competition Act which no longer requires an IXC providing services within the state to obtain a certificate. However, Section 364.02(13), Florida Statutes, requires each IXC to provide the Commission with information to contact and communicate with the company. Section 364.02(13), Florida Statutes, states in pertinent part:

Each intrastate interexchange telecommunications company shall continue to be subject to ss. 364.04, 364.10(3)(a), and (d), 364.285, 364.163, 364.501, 364.603, and 364.604, shall provide the commission with such current information as the commission deems necessary to contact and communicate with the company....

Further, the Tele-Competition Act did not amend Section 364.04, Florida Statutes. IXCs providing service within the state are still required to file a tariff with the Commission in accordance with Section 364.04(1), Florida Statutes, which states:

Upon order of the commission, every telecommunications company shall file with the commission, and shall print and keep open to public inspection, schedules showing the rates, tolls, rentals, contracts, and charges that a company for service to be performed within the state.

#### Proposed Penalty

Staff believes that Raven's failure to provide the Commission with current contact information and file a tariff is a "willful violation" of Sections 364.02 (13) and 364.04, Florida Statutes, in the sense intended by Section 364.285, Florida Statutes.

Pursuant to Section 364.285(1), Florida Statutes, the Commission is authorized to impose upon any entity subject to its jurisdiction a penalty of not more than \$25,000 for each day a violation continues, if such entity is found to have refused to comply with or to have willfully violated any lawful rule or order of the Commission, or any provision of Chapter 364, Florida Statutes, or revoke any certificate issued by it for any such violation. Section 364.285(1), Florida Statutes, however, does not define what it is to "willfully violate" a rule or order. Nevertheless, it appears plain that the intent of the statutory language is to penalize those who affirmatively act in opposition to a Commission order or rule. <u>See, Florida State Racing Commission v. Ponce de Leon Trotting Association</u>, 151 So.2d 633, 634 & n.4 (Fla. 1963); <u>c.f., McKenzie Tank Lines, Inc. v. McCauley</u>, 418 So.2d 1177, 1181 (Fla. 1st DCA 1982) (there must be an intentional commission of an act violative of a statute with knowledge that such an act is likely to result in serious injury) [citing <u>Smith v. Geyer</u> <u>Detective Agency, Inc.</u>, 130 So.2d 882, 884 (Fla. 1961)]. Thus, a "willful violation of law" at least covers an act of purposefulness.

However, "willful violation" need not be limited to acts of commission. The phrase "willful violation" can mean either an intentional act of commission or one of omission, that is failing to act. <u>See</u>, <u>Nuger v. State Insurance Commissioner</u>, 238 Md. 55, 67, 207 A.2d 619, 625 (1965) [emphasis added]. As the First District Court of Appeal stated, "willfully" can be defined as:

An act or omission is 'willfully' done, if done voluntarily and intentionally and with the specific intent to do something the law forbids, or with the specific intent to fail to do something the law requires to be done; that is to say, with bad purpose either to disobey or to disregard the law.

Metropolitan Dade County v. State Department of Environmental Protection, 714 So.2d 512, 517 (Fla. 1st DCA 1998) [emphasis added]. In other words, a willful violation of a statute, rule or order is also one done with an intentional disregard of, or a plain indifference to, the applicable statute or regulation. <u>See</u>, <u>L. R.</u> <u>Willson & Sons, Inc. v. Donovan</u>, 685 F.2d 664, 667 n.1 (D.C. Cir. 1982).

Thus, the failure of Raven to provide the Commission with current contact information and file a tariff meets the standard for a "refusal to comply" and a "willful violation" as contemplated by the Legislature when enacting section 364.285, Florida Statutes.

Nor could Raven claim that it did not know that it had the duty to provide the Commission with current contact information and file a tariff. "It is a common maxim, familiar to all minds, that 'ignorance of the law' will not excuse any person, either civilly or criminally." <u>Barlow v. United States</u>, 32 U.S. 404, 411 (1833); <u>see</u>, <u>Perez v. Marti</u>, 770 So.2d 284, 289 (Fla. 3rd DCA 2000) (ignorance of the law is never a defense). Moreover, in the context of this docket, all telecommunication companies, like Raven are subject to the rules published in the Florida Administrative Code. <u>See</u>, <u>Commercial Ventures</u>, Inc. v. Beard, 595 So.2d 47, 48 (Fla. 1992).

Further, the amount of the proposed penalty (\$25,000) is consistent with penalties previously imposed by the Commission upon IXCs that were providing intrastate interexchange services within the state and failed to obtain a certificate. Staff believes that the act of providing intrastate IXC services within the state without filing a tariff and providing the Commission with current contact information is comparable to providing IXC services within the state without a certificate and should carry the same penalty. Thus, staff recommends that the Commission find that Raven has, by its actions and inactions, willfully violated Sections 364.02(13) and 364.04, Florida Statutes, and impose a \$25,000 penalty on the company to be paid to the Florida Public Service Commission. DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: AUGUST 7, 2003

# **Issue 2:** Should this docket be closed?

**Recommendation**: The Order issued from this recommendation will become final upon issuance of the Consummating Order, unless a person whose substantial interests are affected by the Commission's decision files a protest within 21 days of the issuance of the Proposed Agency Action Order. If the Commission's Order is not protested and the payment of the penalty is not received within fourteen calender days after the issuance of the Consummating Order, the collection of the penalty should be referred to the Department of Financial Services. This docket should be closed administratively upon either receipt of the payment of the penalty or upon the referral of the penalty to the Department of Financial Services. (Rojas)

**Staff Analysis**: Whether staff's recommendation on Issue 1 is approved or denied, the result will be a Proposed Agency Action Order. If no timely protest to the Proposed Agency Action is filed within 21 days of the date of issuance of the Order, this docket should be closed administratively upon receipt of the payment of the penalty or referral of the penalty to the Department of Financial Services. DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: August 7, 2003 Commissioners: Lila A. Jaber, Chairman J. Terry Deason Braulio L. Baez Rudolph "Rudy" Bradley Charles M. Davidson

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### STATE OF FLORIDA



Division of Competitive Markets & Enforcement Walter D'Haeseleer Director (850) 413-6600

# Public Service Commission

February 18, 2003

Via Certified U.S. Mail

Mr. Hector A. Duval President Raven Communications, Inc. 7875 N.W. 12th Street, Suite #111 Miami, FL 33126

# Re: Inquiry into the provision of prepaid calling card services in Florida and consumer complaint (Request No. 515435T).

Dear Mr. Duval:

We have received the enclosed consumer complaint from Ms. Gerty Loza regarding the prepaid phone card branded as *Haiti-Jamaica*. Ms. Loza claims that she was never able to use the phone card and requests a full refund. The back of the card lists your company, Raven Communications, Inc., as the prepaid calling services provider. As the service provider, your company is responsible for ensuring that end user purchased cards remain usable until the expiration date, or in absence of an expiration date, a minimum of one year from the date of first use. Please investigate Ms. Loza's complaint and provide me with a written response to her concerns no later than March 5, 2003.

In addition, our records do not list Raven Communications, Inc. as having obtained a certificate of public convenience and necessity from the Commission. Rule 25-24.910, Florida Administrative Code, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Required, states:

A company shall not provide PPCS [prepaid calling services] without first obtaining a certificate of public convenience and necessity as a local exchange company, alternative local exchange company, or interexchange company. The name used as the provider of PPCS printed on the prepaid calling card shall appear identical to the name in which the certificate is issued. A "doing business as" name may be used in lieu of the certificated name if it is registered as a fictitious name with the Florida Division of Corporations and reflected on the certificate before the name is used on the card.

# DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: August 7, 2003

Attachment A

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Mr. Hector A. Duval Page 2 February 18, 2003

Mr. Duval, to rectify the certification matter, your company should submit an application for an interexchange company certificate to the Division of the Commission Clerk and Administrative Services no later than March 21, 2003. You can obtain an application form and all the pertinent information, including a copy of the Commission's rules, from our website, www.floridapsc.com.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter, please call me at (850) 413-6536.

Sincerely,

Dale R. Buys Regulatory Analyst Bureau of Service Quality

DRB Enclosure

cc: Florida Department of Revenue Certification Section (J. Gilchrist)

Request No515435T Name LOZA, GERTY	Business Name	DATE: August 7
Consumer Information	Florida Public Service	<b>PSC Information</b> 7, 2003
Name: GERTY LOZA Business Name: SVC Address: 17762 SW 114TH AVENUE	Commission - Consumer Request 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard Tallahassee, Florida 32399 850-413-6100	Assigned To: CMP
County: Dade Phone: (305)-259-8529 City/Zip: Miami / 33157- Account Number:	Utility Information Company Code: NA Company: Raven Communications, Inc. Attn.	Via: FAX Prelim Type: PREPAID CALLING PO: Disputed Amt: 5.00
Caller's Name: GERTY LOZA Mailing Address: 17762 SW 114TH AVENUE	Response Needed From Company? y Date Due: 02/21/2003 Fax: R	Supmntl Rpt Req'd: / / Certified Letter Sent: / /
City/Zip:MIAMI ,FL 33157- Can Be Reached: (786)-293-3300 E-Tracking Number:	Interim Report Received: / / Reply Received: / / Reply Received Timely/Late: Informal Conf.: N	Certified Letter Rec'd: / / Closed by: Date: / / Closeout Type: Apparent Rule Violation: N

Preclose type - Prepaid Calling Card

Request customer send in a copy of the front and back of the card.

When did you purchase the card? 12/08/2002

Where did you purchase the card? Chevron gas station in Miami (on Colonial drive) What was the cost of the card? \$5.00

How many minutes were on the card? Unsure, but she was unable to place any calls.

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equest No.	515435T	Name LOZA , GERTY	Business Name
AGE NO:	1	ORIGINIAL	

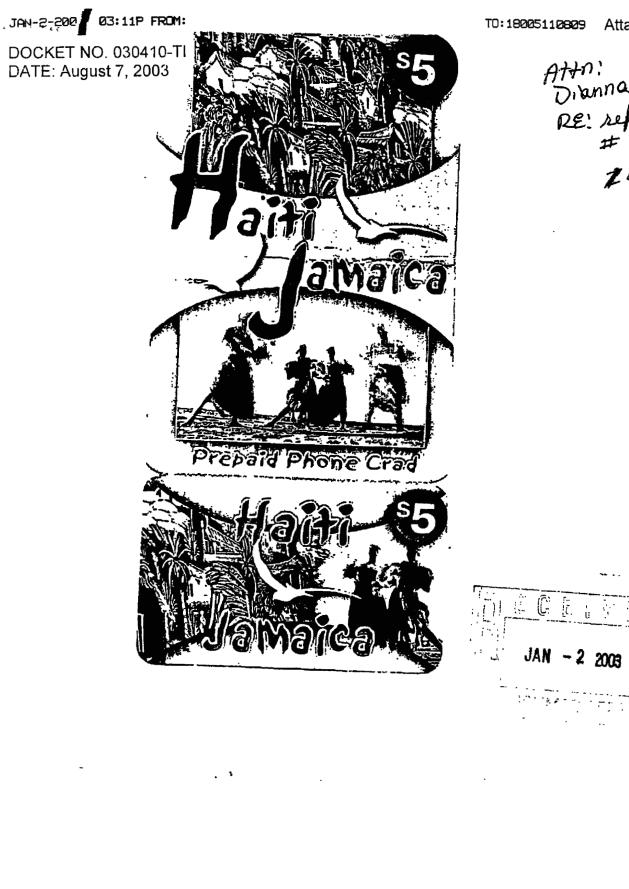
her Comments: Customer states she purchased the card and attempted to use it immediately. She states that IN ON THE CARD did not work, so she contacted customer service. She states she contacted customer invice multiple times, but they were unable to assist her. Customer requests card brought to working order if full refund.

ease investigate this matter, contact the customer, and provide a detailed written report to the Florida. Iblic Service Commission by the due date.

ise taken by DFalise
ind Response to
ix number 850-413-7168
-mail : PSCREPLY@PSC.STATE.FL.US

1/31/2003 Requesting case be forwarded to Competitive Markets and Enforcement. Raven Communications, Inc. RCI) is not listed in Master Commission Directory. ACalhoun

/12/2003 Case reassigned to the Division of Competitive Markets and Enforcement. P.Lowery



T0:18005110809 Attachment A

Attn: Dianna RE: reference # 510000C I of 2 pgs,

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JAN-2-200 03:12P FROM: DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: August 7, 2003

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Attachment A

pton: Nranna ZZZ pages Ref. # 510 000C

# Haiti Jamaica

Thank you for using HAITI JAMAICA prepaid card. HAITI JAMAICA has built its repotation by giving the customer superior quality connections, along with highly competitive rates. Please make same you try our entire line of prepaid phone cards. Be sure to check for the HAITI JAMAICA logo to ensure quality product and service. Gracias por usar la tarjeta telefonica prepagada HAITI JAMAICA. HAITI

JAMAICA ha mantenido sa reputacion dandole al cheate calidad sagemor a prectos altamente competitivos. Por favor recuerden de probar toda nuestra linea de tarjetas prepagadas. Recuerden de revisar el logo de HAITI JAMAICA en las tarjetas para asegurarse de la calidad del protucto y su servicio.

4.12-27-02 SW Abrahan

EASY TO USE Use HAITI JAMAICA from any touch tone phone. HAITI JAMAICA calling card allows you to save money when making phone calls. WARNING: If senisch off is removed.

Do not purchase this card.

FACIL DE USAR Use HAITI JAMAICA desde cualquier telefono de botones · La tarjeta que permite ahorrar dinero cuando hace llamadas. ADVERTENCIA: No compre esta

Brien si el numero de PIN esta raspado. 3. Januar 144 Circutor 1. Januar 144 Circutor 12-13-07 DIAL TOLL FREE! ENGLISH AND SPANISH

3324 ut 1-800-MARQUE:

DIAL: 1-800-820-1511 820-1511 PIN# # DE PIN ÷ \$5 952 025 6732 LICONATIAS DOMESTICAS DOMESTIC: Deal area code + Nemit INTERNATIONAL: Margar el coligo de arta + Namaro LLAMADAS DITEXPLACIONALES: Dial 913 + Country code + City Code + anothe To place another call, do not hang up, press # Marque 011 + Collego de Pas + Collego de Ciudad + No de Taleñoso. Para lance con Burarda no Cuelye, consus da no Carder, consus M Rates are address to cha 14

Q CUSTOMER SERVICE / SERVICO AL CLIENTE: 1-800-741-13481 Card esparts & months from first asc - to referred / Esta targets espara & C <u>no</u> Card expants 6 months from first use - no selen Services provided by RCI 7 Servicies proposes ista tenjeto 13 por BCI 0)

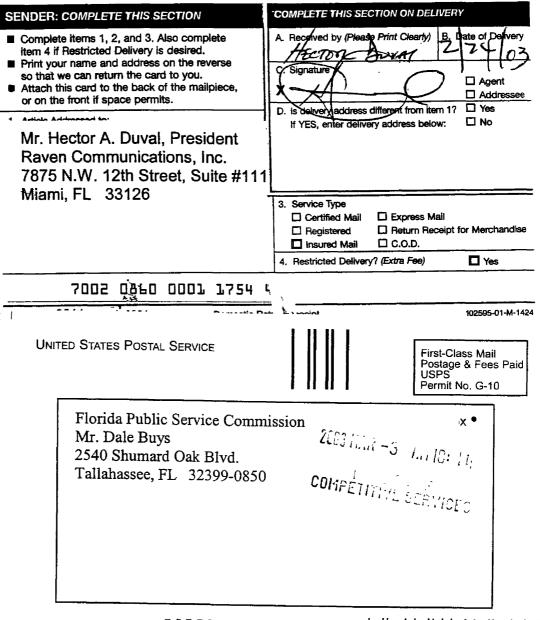
Raves Communication Prepaid Phone Card. uns, Inc

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Raven Communications Inc. 1049 N.W. 129 Avenue Miami, Florida 33182

Phone # (786) 586-3499 Fax # (305) 226-7446 E-Mail: hduval@ravencomm.cc

March 6, 2003

Mr. Dale R. Buys Regulatory Analyst Bureau of Service Quality Capital Circle Office Center 2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0850

#### Ref: Consumer complaint (Request No. 515435T)

Dear Mr. Buys:

After receiving from you the letter dated February 18, 2003, I immediately refunded Mrs. Gerty Loza her money. The card that was sold at the Colonial Chevron and then latter returned was never brought to my attention. This was explained to Mrs. Loza in the letter that was attached with her refund.

In addition, I was not aware of the certification with the State of Florida. But I have already downloaded the application and filled it out. And I am also sending it out today along with this letter. I apologies for any inconvenience that this has caused to both the customer and the State of Florida.

Should you have any questions to the above matter, please don't hesitate in contacting me at the above numbers.

Sincerely,

Hector Duval President Raven Communications Inc. DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: August 7, 2003 Commissioners: Lila A. Jaber, Chairman J. Terry Deason Braulio L. Baez Rudolph "Rudy" Bradley Charles M. Davidson

# STATE OF FLORIDA



Division of Competitive Markets & Enforcement Walter D'Haeseleer Director (850) 413-6600

# Hublic Service Commission

March 31, 2003

### <u>Via Certified U.S. Mail and Facsimile:</u> (305) 226-7446

Mr. Hector A. Duval President Raven Communications, Inc. 7875 N.W. 12th Street, Suite #111 Miami, FL 33126

# Re: Second Notice of requirement to obtain a certificate of public convenience and necessity.

Dear Mr. Duval:

In your letter dated March 6, 2003, responding to the consumer complaint of Ms. Gerty Loza (Case No. 515435T), you indicated that your company sent its application for a certificate of public convenience and necessity (certificate) to the Commission. Also, in my letter dated February 18, 2003, I requested that your company submit its application for a certificate by March 21, 2003. I have enclosed copies of both letters for your review. As of today, our records do not indicate that your company has submitted its application.

Rule 25-24.910, Florida Administrative Code, Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity Required, states:

A company shall not provide PPCS [prepaid calling services] without first obtaining a certificate of public convenience and necessity as a local exchange company, alternative local exchange company, or interexchange company. The name used as the provider of PPCS printed on the prepaid calling card shall appear identical to the name in which the certificate is issued. A "doing business as" name may be used in lieu of the certificated name if it is registered as a fictitious name with the Florida Division of Corporations and reflected on the certificate before the name is used on the card.

If the Commission does not receive Raven Communications, Inc.'s certificate application by **April 18, 2003**, a docket will be opened to implement formal compliance proceedings. Please understand that by Section 364.285, Florida Statutes, the Commission is authorized to impose upon any entity subject to its jurisdiction a penalty of not more than \$25,000 per day for each offense, if

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Mr. Hector A. Duval Page 2 March 31, 2003

such entity is found to have refused to comply with or to have willfully violated any lawful rule or order of the Commission, or any provision of Chapter 364. Currently, it appears that Raven Communications, Inc. is in violation of Rule 25-24.910, Florida Administrative Code.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter, please call me at (850) 413-6536.

Sincerely,

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Dale R. Buys Regulatory Analyst Bureau of Service Quality

DRB Enclosures (2)

Raven Communications Inc. 1049 N.W. 129 Avenue Miami, Florida 33182

Phone # (786) 586-3499 Fax # (305) 226-7446 E-Mail: <u>hduval@ravencomm.cc</u>

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In addition, I was not aware of the certification with the State of Florida. But I have already downloaded the application and filled it out. And I am also sending it out today along with this letter. I apologies for any inconvenience that this has caused to both the customer and the State of Florida.

Should you have any questions to the above matter, please don't hesitate in contacting me at the above numbers.

Sincerely.

Hector Duval President Raven Communications Inc.



DATE: August 7, 2003 COMMISSIONERS: LILA A. JABER, CHAIRMAN J. TERRY DEASON BRAULIO L. BAEZ RUDOLPH "RUDY" BRADLEY CHARLES M. DAVIDSON

### STATE OF FLORIDA



**DIVISION OF COMPETITIVE MARKETS &** ENFORCEMENT WALTER D'HAESELEER DIRECTOR (850) 413-6600

# Public Service Commission

February 18, 2003

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Mr. Hector A. Duval President Raven Communications, Inc. 7875 N.W. 12th Street, Suite #111 Miami, FL 33126

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Internet E-mail: contact@psc.state.fl.us

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### DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: August 7, 2003

Mr. Hector A. Duval Page 2 February 18, 2003

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Should you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter, please call me at (850) 413-6536.

Sincerely,

Dale R. Buys Regulatory Analyst Bureau of Service Quality

DRB Enclosure

cc: Florida Department of Revenue Certification Section (J. Gilchrist) TRANSMISSION VERIFICATION REPORT

DOCKET NO. 030410-TI DATE: August 7, 2003

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Attachment E



03/31/2003 16:38

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