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To: Toronto City Council
Re: FM Chip Activation

The National Campus and Community Radio Association (NCRA) - with the support of the member motion from Councillor Mary Fragedakis and second by Paula Fletcher as well as recommendation of the City of Toronto Executive Committee - urges Toronto City Council to support the Free Radio On My Phone FM Chip Campaign by submitting letters to smartphone manufacturers asking them to enable FM Chips in their devices. We ask the City Council request the City Manager to write and invite discussion with the major mobile phone services providers that service Toronto (Bell, Rogers, Telus, Freedom Mobile) and the major smartphone manufactures to encourage them to work together to activate the FM radio receiver capability in smartphones sold in Canada, and to report on the outcomes of such discussions. This will provide low-cost entertainment, news and emergency information to Toronto residents at the tips of their fingers at any time. We also ask the city to request the Government of Canada to take steps to require all major smartphone manufacturers and mobile phone carriers to activate the FM Chip in smartphones sold in Canada, and raise consumer awareness about this life-saving measure.

By taking the steps to support the NCRA's campaign to unlock the FM chip here are some of the highlights to how it will benefit Toronto residents:

- Save 3x the battery life of your phone - compared to streaming service
- Save 20x the data use on your phone - compared to streaming service
- Allow for emergency broadcasting and public safety alerts as mandated in the NPAS system
- Supporting individuals with hearing and other disabilities to access technology to aid in communication

Barry Rooke
National Campus and Community Radio Association
Executive Director

Why is unlocking the FM Chip important?

In an emergency, cell towers and Internet access may be unavailable. FM radio might be your only source for receiving important information. Disasters are local, and the most important information is going to come from local broadcasters that are plugged in to local officials telling you what's going on the ground. FM Radio is already mandated to automatically broadcast emergency messages thanks to the CRTC's emergency plans.

How does it benefit society?

Radio is a traditional way for governments to communicate with people during a disaster — radios are cheap, very common, use little electricity, and communication is instant. Enabling FM chips means over 50% of smartphone users will have access to an FM Radio at all times.

Is it economically sound?

There is relatively no additional cost to unlock the FM chip in smartphones and some are already enabled. Adding them to phones at the manufacturing stage is also very low cost.

Will it work on all smartphones?

Most android phones have a FM chip already installed, just not activated. iPhones have the chip as well but not activated. In Canada there are 57 phones that we have identified that work, including most Blu, Moto and some LG phones. The United States have over 100 and many more manufacturers than in Canada.

What work needs to be done?

The heavy lifting has already been done. The collaboration between the radio industry and work with most major phone manufacturers have enable the FM tuner in smartphones. Now it's just a matter of action to get the mobile phone carriers to work with smartphone manufacturers to turn them on. Your pressure and support will help lead other municipalities to also join in the campaign and provide this very important safety and consumer desired feature that is being withheld.

Where else has this been done?

Both Mexico and the United States have been successful in unlocking the FM chip in smartphones. A perfect example of a success story can be seen in app NextRadio. NextRadio is a hybrid radio app that uses the FM chip in your smartphone or tablet to receive local FM radio stations, and your smartphone's Internet connection to provide artist and song information, album art, and other visual enhancements and interactive capabilities.

Why are cell phone carriers hesitant to get on board?

Some wireless carriers do not see much demand for FM radio on mobile devices because there are so many Internet-based options. Streaming radio through cellphones result in providers making a lot more money off of streaming radio or other sources, rather than offering free through unlocking the FM chip.

Why are smartphone manufacturers hesitant to get on board?

Because no-one is telling them they are needed. If the general public does not know it is available, and mobile phone carriers do not also apply pressure to the manufacturers, phones will continue to be manufactured or left without the device being activated.

Read more from what the people are saying

https://www.change.org/p/canadian-telecoms-enable-fm-chips-on-smartphones-canada/w?source_location=petition_show

Learn more at www.freeradioonmyphone.ca

About the NCRA:

The NCRA/ANREC is a not-for-profit national association working to recognize, support, and encourage volunteer-based, non-profit, public-access campus and community-based broadcasters in Canada. We provide advice and advocacy for individual campus and community ("c/c") stations, and conduct lobbying and policy development initiatives with a view to advancing the role and increasing the effectiveness of our sector. Our goals are to ensure stability and support for individual stations, and to promote the long-term growth and effectiveness of the sector. We currently represent 101 not-for-profit member radio stations including CHRY-FM, CHHA-AM, CJRU-FM, CKHC-FM, RegentPark Radio and Fusion Radio (UofTScarb) in Toronto.