



CITY COUNCIL REFERRAL OF MEMBER MOTION

Unlocking FM Radio on Smartphones

Date: May 1, 2017
To: Executive Committee
From: City Council
Wards: All

CITY COUNCIL DECISION

City Council on April 26, 27 and 28, 2017, referred Motion MM28.10 to the Executive Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Councillor Mary Fragedakis, seconded by Councillor Paula Fletcher, recommends that:

1. City Council request the City Manager to write the major mobile phone service providers that service Toronto (Bell, Rogers, Telus, Freedom Mobile) and the major smartphone manufacturers encouraging them to work together to activate the FM radio receiver capability in smartphones sold in Canada.
2. City Council request the Government of Canada to take the requisite steps to require all mobile phone carriers to activate FM chips in smartphones sold in Canada and to provide technical support and education to foster the Canadian consumer's awareness and use of the FM radio capacity on their smartphone.

SUMMARY

Many smartphones have a radio chip that could pick up an FM radio signal. Smartphones could operate as a radio using very little power and without internet connectivity. However, in Canada, too few smartphone users are able to take advantage of this. There is a campaign led by the National Campus and Community Radio (which represents 95 non-profit radio stations across the Canada) to change this. The cooperation of mobile phone carriers and smartphone manufacturers is needed to

"switch on" these chips. In the United States, Sprint did so starting in 2013 and other American carriers have followed suit.

Unlocking FM radio on smartphones would support two important City of Toronto policy initiatives – enhancing our live music sector and strengthening our emergency preparedness.

Improving Torontonians access to FM radio will improve their connection to their local music industry. Many FM stations actively organize and promote live music events. They can also have, as part of their mandate, fostering local and emerging artists.

FM radio on smartphones would be a great help to many people during an emergency and could potentially save lives. In the United States, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has come out strongly in support of this initiative and point out that broadcast radio is, at times, the only way to receive emergency information during a disaster, when other services are jammed with overuse.

The Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission requires all Canadian radio stations and TV stations, cable/satellite providers to have the capacity to provide emergency alert messages. Since approximately seventy-five percent of Canadians own a smartphone and people generally keep their smartphone close by, activating the FM chip on them would greatly enhance this Federal Government program.

Declared Interests (City Council)

The following member(s) declared an interest:

Mayor John Tory - as he has an ongoing involvement in the Rogers family of companies.