

Introduction of "City of Toronto Weekly Podcast"

Date:	March 30, 2012
To:	Government Management Committee
From:	City Manager
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

At its meeting on January 30, 2012, Government Management Committee requested the City Manager:

1. Make available on the City's website various podcasts, as noted in the Summary Section of the report dated January 13, 2012, from the City Manager for a period of one year as a pilot project.
2. Determine, based on the evaluation of the pilot project, whether podcasts should continue as a communication tactic for the City.
3. Direct the appropriate City staff to investigate the opportunities for partnerships with media outlets, including the possibility of Rogers Cable, for providing weekly City news available on podcast, and also various journalism schools in the Greater Toronto Area to participate in researching and producing weekly podcasts for the City of Toronto and report to Government Management Committee on April 25, 2012.

To date, the City has recorded and posted several podcasts (Our Toronto, Council Highlights and Toronto this week). The City will regularly produce the following podcasts on an annual basis as well as special announcements as required:

- Council Highlights – 11 podcasts
- Our Toronto – 3 podcasts
- Toronto this week – approximately 52 podcasts

The City contacted a number of journalism schools about possible partnerships and/or intern opportunities for their students to produce a weekly 30-minute podcast. One expressed an interest in the project but upon further discussion, it was determined that the

timing and duration of intern opportunities for students would not be appropriate for this project.

Rogers TV and the Strategic Communications Division are currently exploring a partnership arrangement to develop, produce and broadcast a 30-minute bi-weekly (twice a month) current affairs program that would air from September to May. The program would present a balanced view of City politics, programs and services. Rogers TV and the City of Toronto would share editorial control of the program. There would be no financial cost to the City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Manager recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the City Manager to enter into a partnership agreement with Rogers TV to produce and broadcast a bi-weekly 30-minute television program about City of Toronto news and events.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact to producing podcasts as noted in the Summary as part of a year-long pilot project as all work would be managed internally using existing City resources.

There is no financial impact to producing a weekly 30-minute current affairs television program as a partnership with Rogers TV.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of January 30, 2012, the Government Management Committee adopted a request that the City Manager explore the option of partnering with media outlets or journalism schools in the GTA to produce a 30-minute weekly podcast.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2012.GM10.3>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Podcasts are increasingly being produced by professional organizations such as radio stations, businesses, organizations, schools and universities and governments. As the

technology with digital audio capability grows, podcast downloading continues to increase.

COMMENTS

Further to the direction of Government Management Committee, the City contacted several colleges and universities in the Toronto area about the production of a 30-minute weekly podcast on City news. Of the schools contacted, only Centennial College expressed any interest. The College felt that this might be a good opportunity to place a student with the City as an intern. Upon further discussion, it was discovered that interns are only available in the winter/spring. Students would not be available to produce the weekly podcast on a year-round basis as they are only available for a period of six to eight weeks at a time, then a new student would need to be recruited, trained, etc. Additionally the time commitment required by the City to teach and manage the student, review the student's work, etc. was not compatible with the City's needs.

As requested by Government Management Committee, Strategic Communications approached Rogers TV to determine if there was any interest in partnering with the City to produce a weekly 30-minute television program about City issues. Due to production and budget considerations, Rogers TV indicated that a bi-weekly 30-minute current affairs program would be of interest. Strategic Communications is currently in discussion with Rogers TV to develop, produce and broadcast a 30-minute bi-weekly current affairs program. The program would present a balanced view of City politics, programs and services, events and the people that make up the City of Toronto.

This would be an informative, open and balanced show touching on a variety of topics from City news to profiles; every episode would provide a refreshing and dynamic look at our city from Toronto to Scarborough to North York and Etobicoke. The show would include a segment whereby City Councillors would have the opportunity to speak directly about a specific topic of interest from their respective ward.

The City would be responsible for driving the content of every episode. This includes determining the topics for each program as well as securing appropriate interviews and locations for segment shooting. Rogers TV would provide a full production crew including a producer to work in tandem with the City on the creation of this show. There would be no financial cost to the City.

Additionally, Rogers will put in place a promotional package to help draw viewers to the show that includes: up to two guest appearances (by the City) prior to the show's launch on *daytime Toronto*, Rogers' live morning talk show, web page on rogerstv.com, web banner ads and press releases. The City would also promote the program via its website, twitter and press releases.

Rogers TV and the City of Toronto have a long history of working together collaboratively. Rogers Cable has broadcast television coverage of meetings of City Council on its community channel for many years. This broadcast increases access to the democratic process at City Hall for the general public while also meeting Rogers requirement to provide community access programming to the general public.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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