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To: [Clerk](#)
Cc: [Councillor Shan](#); aperuzza@toronto.ca; [Rosemary](#); [Cathy Edwards](#); [Victoria Fenner](#)
Subject: My comments for 2017.MM35.1 on December 7, 2017 City Council
Date: Thursday, December 7, 2017 5:47:09 PM

To the City Clerk:

Please add my comments to the agenda for the December 7, 2017 City Council meeting on item 2017.MM35.1, Request to Reinstate Rogers Community Television Channel - by Councillor Anthony Perruzza, seconded by Councillor Neethan Shan

I understand that my comments and the personal information in this email will form part of the public record and that my name will be listed as a correspondent on agendas and minutes of City Council or its committees. Also, I understand that agendas and minutes are posted online and my name may be indexed by search engines like Google.

Comments:

These comments are submitted by the Toronto Community Media Network (TCMN).

As Chair of the Toronto Community Media Network (TCMN), a fledgling organization committed to providing Torontonians free media literacy training via a multi-platform distribution network model in which to promote hyper-local, community produced content, and Toronto Chapter of the Canadian Association for Community Television Users and Stations CACTUS, on behalf of the TCMN Steering Committee, I support, in principal, the motion put forth by Councillor Anthony Perruzza, seconded by Councillor Neethan Shan.

I and my colleagues fully support community television as a democratic platform for Torontonians to craft and share their stories, with the support of industry professionals to instruct them in hands-on training to facilitate mass broadcast.

However, I do not agree that Rogers Communications/Community Channels are the entity to provide this service.

I attended and gave testimony at the CRTC Hearing 421-2015 'Review of Local and Community Television, in regard to petitioning the CRTC to provide funding and opportunity to independents willing and better placed to provide this public service.

I would like to share with you my responses to the CRTC, to bolster my position that a community platform is needed but Rogers is not necessarily the organization to provide it.

(421-2015 Section 9310)

My response to Commissioner Molnar's query that Rogers can facilitate a community television platform due to their existing infrastructure and experience:

With respect, I do not believe the Toronto Community Media Network's objectives fall into line with Rogers or any other corporate interest. Simply put, community media in Toronto is not considered of "value". The value ascribed to community television in Toronto by Rogers is measured in dollars and cents not as holistic value to the community. In line 5150, Mr. Watt stated, "We provided a model that would allow companies operating both local television stations and community channels to reallocate resources from major markets to smaller, underserved and underfunded centers." This model is self-serving and holds little concern for the community needs of Torontonians. Rogers has the resources and ample time to imbed community-access throughout its coverage areas, but has never had the will to do so. The three community-access channels Ms Watson referred to in line 5881 are insufficient to provide access to 5 million citizens (not subscribers). If Rogers does outreach in day camps, co-op programs with high schools and credit programs with community colleges (line 5254) then why isn't evidence of this present on their Toronto channel? Why do they not have more of a presence after 40+ years of providing community programming. I believe Rogers' lack of interest is firmly evident.

(421-2015 Section 5432 - Commissioner Watson)

It is high time to stop the monopolization of Rogers as the primary providers of mass-market

community media and its access. It is naive to suggest that a corporate entity has the will or understanding of what community media really is. It is not, as it has been outlined in either Rogers' proposal nor Mr. Watt's statement, line 5150, "We provided a model that would allow companies operating both local television stations and community channels to reallocate resources from major markets to smaller, underserved and underfunded centers." Community media is portrayed as the sole domain of Rogers, to be manipulated as a commodity, for the purposes of generating revenues as per their business model.

Community is not a philological, intangible notion. It is a representation of the people who live and propagate among themselves and their environment. Further, community is now perceived as 'what matters to me in relation to my personal community', as was discussed at the McLuhan Centre for Culture and technology. If Rogers is doing it "right", they would be as fluent in the changing trends as they are with the paradigm shift of the monetization of telecommunication services. They would have evolved to the stage where some of their volunteers would be utilized as Community Ambassadors that attend community-centric events, such as the one mentioned, to correlate information and provide content that is derived by hard, empirical evidence and not philosophical, 'the broadcaster knows best' notions.

(421-2015 Section The Chairperson – 5626, 5632 & Ms. Watson – 5627, 5629, 5635)

There has been reference to individual content being made and disseminated on VOD channels. Therefore, it is reasonable to derive that the citizenry is not waiting for corporations to provide hyper-local, meaningful content and they've taken matters into their own hands. Just because one can play with clay does not a sculpture make. Access to training and to the platform makes for better, more robust storytelling that is compelling and packageable for use in a wire service. I find it curious that in Rogers' third element of their proposal that would "require community channels to make minimum commitments to local news and information programming". Community television has been derided for its "amateurish" look, feel and content. Why then take funding/resources away when they've clearly included community-generated content into their own business model? Further, how can they think they have a right to content produced for free to offset their commercial interests?

(421-2015 Section The Chairperson – 5382 & Ms. Smith – 5411, 5413)

Community television should be viewed as a business that has access to Federal and Municipal funding, the same way Cogeco, Bell and Rogers do. The old attitudes and perceptions need to be addressed and brought into the 21 century.

It is not Rogers' fault that they are out-of-touch with small, local business advertising spends and habits – they are just too small for their consideration. The example was given of "Joe's Muffler shop" producing spots between \$5,000 to \$10,000 that are of "good quality and compelling". As a former publisher of a community magazine, I can say that those figures can represent the entire monthly operating budget for some small business owners.

Use of words such as "product" "customers" "subscribers" vs "Torontonians", "citizens" and "community members" - It is painfully obvious to see where the corporation representatives'

priorities are - Revenues.

Myself and members of CACTUS and TCMN welcome the opportunity to discuss a Government-Access channel, similar to the example set by Fairfax County, Virginia. Assisting the City to better communicate its services the citizenry and de-clutter the current site is a basic tenet of community television programming and a cost-effective messaging platform TCMN and CACTUS would like to explore at your convenience.

I/we would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillors Anthony Perruzza and Neethan Shanthe CRTC for realizing the importance of community television. Without theirs and other's support, TCMN, CACTUS and other independent community organizations would not have the chance to advance media literacy in our community of 5 million diverse voices.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or would like to arrange a meeting.

Regards,

Dahne

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