

Toronto councillor, staff at odds over city podcasts

Kristin Annable Jan 28, 2012 – 12:13 AM ET

Conflict is brewing between Councillor Paul Ainslie and the strategic communications department over proposed weekly podcasts produced by the city.

Mr. Ainslie, chairman of the government management committee, made a motion to the committee in May proposing a city-produced 30-minute weekly roundup of city news similar to podcasts done in Edmonton and Ottawa.

On Monday, the strategic communications department will be seeking approval instead for only a five-minute podcast.

Jackie DeSouza, the city’s strategic communications director, said a 30-minute production would require hiring another staff member and cost the city \$50,000 annually, whereas a five-minute format would be absorbed within the existing communications budget.

Mr. Ainslie is not pleased.

“All the research I have done says that a well-produced half-hour podcast can be created in five or six hours,” he said. “Now they’re trying to say it would take 20 to 30 hours.”

He is hoping to convince committee members on Monday that his 30-minute podcast is financially feasible.

“If I have to go and find a student and a camera and start recording my own podcasts, I will.”

He believes a 30-minute format could feature audio and video from events such as Nuit Blanche, and include interviews with the Mayor and councillors.

If the city proceeds with the five-minute format, Ms. DeSouza said it will be hosted by various city staff and cover city news releases and announcements. Eleven times a year, a synopsis of city council decisions would be broadcast.

But five minutes is just not enough for politicians, said Mr. Ainslie. “When it comes to City Hall and politics, it is pretty quick to get up five minutes.”

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