

Charlie Angus Set To Propose Canadian MP3 Player Levy

March 12, 2010 - Global | Digital and Mobile

By Robert Thompson, Toronto

Music industry sources say Canadian Member of Parliament Charlie Angus, the NDP's digital issues critic, is preparing to enter a private member's bill next week proposing the country's private copying levy should be extended to MP3 players.

The levy is currently in place on other blank media, but attempts to extend it to MP3 players have failed in the past. The discussion of the levy came at the same time Canadian music industry insiders at Canadian Music Week were focused on the possibility of a new Copyright Act for Canada, after support for intellectual property was referenced in the Conservative government's throne speech last week.

Angus did not immediately respond to calls to his office for comment.

Also referred to as the "blank media tax," the levy is designed to compensate publishers and performers for music transferred by individuals for personal use.

Currently blank CDs, for example, have a levy of \$0.29 per unit. MP3 players, or digital audio recorders, have been the subject of debate before, with the Canadian Private Copying Collective, which represents Canadian music publishers, seeking a levy of between \$5 and \$75 per MP3 player.

In 2008, a Canadian court ruled the Copyright Board did not have the authority to authorize such a levy.

Music industry insiders were divided on whether the bill had any chance of success given that it wasn't clear how much support it would receive from other opposition parties, namely the Liberals and the Bloc Quebecois.

Canadian intellectual property lawyer Mark Hayes says he would be surprised the bill was successful.

"My guess is that it is doubtful it would make it very far," he says. "The electronics business is a lot more important to the economy than the recording business and has a lot more influence at Industry [Canada, the government department]."