

SAFETY & SECURITY CAMPAIGN



Matthew Palynchuk is the Project Leader for the NIHL program and the SSC. He holds a MA in Philosophy from Concordia University and will begin a MA in Bioethics at McGill this coming fall.

Imagine you wake up to an emergency and can't find your hearing aid or cochlear implant processor (or the batteries have died). What do you do? How do you contact emergency services (first responders)? For years, this has been a worry for those in the deaf and hard of hearing communities.

As a student hired by Hear Quebec under the Canada Summer Jobs program, I was set to the task of creating an awareness campaign for a new service that has been offered to most Canadians: Text with 911 (or T9-1-1), which allows people to engage in a text conversation with 911 call centres.

This terrific initiative, provided by the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA), allows persons with hearing loss who do not use (or have trouble using) phones an accessible way to communicate with services in an emergency.

At first I knew very little about such a service and found that little information was out there. After speaking to colleagues, family and friends with hearing loss, I realized how essential a service like this is. Fundamental services, like the police, fire department and paramedics need to be a priority for universal and equal accessibility.

Currently, the websites of the SPVM, the Fire Department and the City of Montreal do not include any information about this essential program. Indeed, it wasn't until July 9, 2018 that the CWTA's website included Montreal and its surrounding areas in the list of areas that offer it. The CWTA included in an email correspondence the number of people who have registered for the service by region, and in Montreal only about 125 people have registered for the English option.

The safety and security of our membership and the hard of hearing community more broadly is of utmost importance to Hear Quebec. As a result of this general lack of awareness, in conjunction with our mandate to serve the English-speaking community with hearing loss, we have initiated the Safety and Security Campaign (SSC) to advise institutions to raise awareness about T9-1-1.

Registration for Text 911 is easy! As long as you have a hearing loss and a cell phone with a texting plan, you can register through your cell phone service provider. Details can be found on the CWTC site, along with links to different providers' websites for specific details.

It is Hear Quebec's hope that our campaign will promote equality of access to essential services and make a significant impact for those in the hard of hearing community, many of whom require this service in case of emergency.

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