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MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

HAPPY SPRING…it has been a long time coming for everyone no matter what province you live in. Spring, for many people is an incentive to do some serious cleaning in their homes. You know, wash away the winter dirt to start with a fresh and clean environment. How many of your centres get a spring cleaning. This is the time to have your IT folks, or their designates (probably you) clean out the keyboards and dust behind all the monitors and equipment.

This is the time to have your carpet cleaned – there are places that can do it with a minimal of bother to the staff on duty, just do some research and let your boss know who they are in the area. How many of you get your chairs cleaned? Now is the time to get that upholstery nozzle out and at least vacuum off the dust. Some folks I know in comm. centres actually bring in their carpet shampooers to do the upholstery—imagine that!

This is also the time that you should be getting rid of all the old magazines, books, pamphlets, old orders and all those bits of paper and sticky notes around each console. If it is important, log it somewhere, but usually these little pink and yellow reminders were for one event that took place some time ago.

This would also be a good time to clean out your lockers. Find that workout sock you mis-located last fall. Purge the crackers that are probably very stale – update the pictures of your kids – I am sure they wouldn’t be impressed if they knew you still had their grade 6 picture on the wall of your locker, especially if they are now entering college!

Last but certainly not least, clean out the lunchroom and the fridge. I mean a good top to bottom; soap, water, and vinegar clean up. The fridge has had to live through some very interesting science experiments and containers of stuff that will never see the light of day again. This is one of the bones of contention in every communications centre that I have ever been to, or spoken with. Theoretically the fridge should never get that bad – but clean it anyway, even if it isn’t –it won’t hurt (unless you throw out someone’s container that has been in their family for years and why didn’t you let us know you would be cleaning out the fridge! Blah blah blah)

Hope you all had a good Telecommunicators Week. Should anyone get the urge to want to write for our publication, please contact me at theresa.virgin@apco.ca.

That’s it for now,

Editorially yours,

Theresa Virgin ENP,
President, APCO Canada,
Editor-in-Chief
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Over the past few months I have been working with our conference planner on both our national event and our upcoming Emerging Technology Forum that will take place May 20–21 in Toronto. The event in Toronto is a first collaboration between APCO Canada and APCO International. It will bring together subject matter experts from both side of the border to discuss relevant issues on a number of exciting topics.

Our national conference in Vancouver is slowly taking shape, and I am pleased to announce that a number of our key sponsors have committed to attending and supporting the event financially. Motorola Solutions has again stepped up as out Platinum sponsor, with other companies already committing to Gold, Silver, and Bronze levels.

We are pleased to announce that our opening keynote address will be delivered by Nathan Lee, founder and president of the Denise Amber Lee Foundation. Nathan will deliver an emotional presentation about the day his wife Denise was abducted, raped, and murdered. The unbelievable number of opportunities and corresponding failures to save her that evening will be discussed and analyzed in this inspiring call to the 9-1-1 industry to do better.

The preventable death of his wife in Florida in 2008 has garnered national attention on the need for a better trained and certified 9-1-1 workforce. His wife’s story has been featured on Dateline NBC, ABC’s Primetime, CNN, Dr. Phil, and numerous other national venues. Attendees will leave with a sense of pride in the importance of the job they do and every call they take could be the next Denise.

Our closing keynote address will be delivered by Dr. John Izzo. Dr. John Izzo helps companies maximize their potential from the ground up. For over 20 years, Dr. Izzo has worked with thousands of leaders around the world, on employee-engagement strategies and brand transformations. Dr. Izzo has been a pioneer in employee engagement, leading change, shifting employee and consumer values and corporate social responsibility. He is known for his hard hitting practical content, his inspirational storytelling and the lasting impact he has on organizations.

He advises some of the world’s most admired companies, conducts leading-edge research on workplace, and has spoken to more than one million people around the globe. He has served on the boards of several large conservation organizations and worked with over 500 companies to create more socially responsible workplaces.

We have also brought forward a new APCO Canada Award that will recognize a “Trainer of the Year.” If you want more information about the APCO Canada Awards, please check out our conference web site at www.apcocanadaconference.com or click link below.

www.apcocanadaconference.com/program/annual-awards/

In closing, your board is and always will represent you in voicing your issues and concerns as they relate to new technology in your profession. APCO Canada has been doing this for over 25 years and will always be your voice for public safety communications in Canada.
New Text with 9-1-1 Service Increases Safety for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Speech Impaired Canadians

By Ashlee Smith
Very few people could have predicted a decade ago how dramatically the power of wireless would totally transform the lives of Canadians – not only in how we communicate with each other – but in almost every aspect of our day-to-day lives in the home, in the workplace and anywhere and anytime in between.

The speed at which wireless technology has evolved is truly incredible. Every day, it seems there are new advances that are reshaping our world for the better. The days of the cell phone that just simply made phone calls are long gone. In addition to sending text messages and e-mails and browsing the Internet at lightning fast speeds, we can do things like monitor our homes and provide critical medical information to our doctors directly from our smartphones.

Canada now has well over 28 million wireless subscribers. This number is staggering considering just 10 years ago there were only 13 million users. And, Canada has some of the fastest, most advanced wireless networks on the planet, and we are among the fastest adopters of the latest and greatest smartphones in the world.

But beyond calling, texting and watching videos, wireless is also quickly becoming a game changer for those in vulnerable communities. A new text-messaging based wireless service is connecting those in the deaf, deafened, hard of hearing or speech impaired (DHHSI) communities to emergency services in Canada.

Text with 9-1-1, or commonly referred to as T9-1-1, provides 9-1-1 call centres with the ability to converse with a DHHSI person during an emergency, using text messaging. When a DHHSI person requires 9-1-1 services, they dial 9-1-1 on their cell phone. There is no need for a caller to speak or hear, as the 9-1-1 call taker will normally receive an indicator from registered users that tells them to communicate with the caller via text messaging. The 9-1-1 call taker then initiates a text message conversation with the caller to address the emergency.

This unique Canadian solution was developed by the CRTC Interconnection Steering Committee (CISC) Emergency Services Working Group (ESWG), comprised of members from emergency services, telecommunications service providers, vendors and other stakeholders. After examining the ways in which emergency services could be more readily access by those in the DHHSI community, T9-1-1 was put to the test in 2012 in Vancouver, Toronto, the Peel Region, and Montreal. The results of these trials showed that while limitations exist with the service, it would be a dramatic improvement to the current system.

Since that time, wireless carriers across the country have completed all of the required network upgrades to implement T9-1-1. However, before the T9-1-1 service can be made available to DHHSI cell phone users, 9-1-1 call centres must also complete technology upgrades as well.

All members of the DHHSI community across Canada can start to register for the service, even though the service is not yet available nation-wide. National registration allows those who need it to utilize the service only when they are within a specific region that has deployed T9-1-1.

At this time, the T9-1-1 service is only available in Metro Vancouver, the City of Calgary, and the Peel Region. The service will be implemented by 9-1-1 call centres in different municipalities or regions at different time periods over the next several years. DHHSI citizens should check the new www.Textwith911.ca Web site frequently to see which new areas or regions have rolled out the service.

Those who wish to register for the service must do so through their wireless service provider. Without taking this crucial step, important information may not be relayed to the user such as checking to make sure that the user’s device is compatible with the service. Some devices are not able to make a voice call and send and received text messages simultaneously, so it is critical to double check this when registering for the service. Links to the wireless service provider’s Web sites are also available at www.Textwith911.ca.

This service is an exciting step in the right direction in ensuring that all Canadians will have access to life-saving emergency services. However, as with any new technology, limitations do exist. For example, no text messaging service can guarantee that a message will be sent or received in a timely manner. Additionally, mobile devices are, well, mobile, and staying within the footprint of a service area may also present challenges for those who utilize the service.

Also, voice calling remains the only way to communicate with 9-1-1 services for a person that is not deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, or have speech impairment. Text messages sent directly to the digits “9-1-1” do not reach emergency services. Text with 9-1-1 for the public at large is expected to be deployed at a later date.

We must keep in mind that when 9-1-1 first became available for Canadians last century, the concept of a cellular phone, let alone text messaging, was something out of science-fiction. 9-1-1 was not created in such a way that combining this type of sophisticated technology with emergency services would be easy nor that it would be seamless. The goal for Text with 9-1-1 for now is to do a better job at connecting vulnerable Canadians than ever before.

Ashlee Smith is the Manager of Communications with the Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association (CWTA). The Ottawa-based group is the authority on wireless issues, trends and developments in Canada. Ms. Smith can be reached at asmith@cwta.ca.
Instead of looking for a non-existent super-device that can do everything well, Senior Design Engineer Dave Slaten recommends you consider unifying your critical communications with a Vehicle Area Network.

Organizations are no longer restricted to a single bearer technology and can now take advantage of LMR, LTE, 3G and WiFi. But to work effectively, the shift from bearer to bearer must be seamless and largely invisible to the users. In other words, a unified critical communications approach can dynamically direct voice and data according to unfolding situations and environments. First responders must be secure and invest their time on the real issues; not worry about what they can and can’t do, depending on where they are.
Can One Device Do It All?
A unified approach implies the need for a universal user device that can connect to many wireless communications networks – LMR, public cellular, private LTE, WiFi, Satellite and whatever the future holds. But the truth is, a single user device cannot efficiently do a great job. There are several reasons for this:

- Because technology changes so rapidly, these “ultimate devices” will quickly become outdated. While LMR device lifecycles are seven to ten years, cellular data smart devices are usually less than three years.
- Too many features on one device complicate life for the user and buyer. No one wants to pay for 307 features when they regularly use only five or ten functions.
- Upgrading hardware to stay current with bearer technology will likely incur significant costs. A better alternative is to provide choice, so users are free to select the tools appropriate to each situation.

Multiple Devices, Multiple Bearers
Multiple devices offer flexibility for users to consistently receive the best communication. However this should not result in a complex user experience. A balance must be reached between a single, overly-complex device and having so many tools that the belt gets heavy.

By unifying critical communications, multiple devices and bearers can be leveraged, while maintaining an intuitive user interface. Make and receive individual or group calls on whichever device you choose; PTT should work the same on an LMR radio or a smart phone.

Out of cellular coverage? No problem, your phone’s SMS message can be routed over the LMR network.

Striking the Balance with Vehicle Area Networks
Vehicles are now becoming mobile communications hubs. This makes sense: cars and trucks have the power and space to host powerful communications tools.

A Vehicle Area Network (VAN) is a local area network in and around a moving vehicle. The network enables devices in and around the vehicle to communicate, providing WiFi, Bluetooth or ethernet for a growing range of commercially-available devices. Smart phones, tablets or laptops can be wirelessly networked. Vehicle-based equipment such as medical diagnostic tools in an ambulance may be directly connected. Vehicle diagnostic or personal physiological sensors can be locally integrated for remote situational monitoring.

The VAN will connect these locally-networked devices to your system’s backhaul bearers. Here’s how:

1. Start with a commercial 3G or 4G modem and SIM card from your preferred carrier.
2. Connect your existing P25 or DMR radio for a much wider and more reliable coverage range.
3. Add a second modem easily, when a private data network becomes available.
4. Install a satellite link when remote connectivity is required.

By including dedicated processing power, local data storage and customizable software, the VAN terminal is transformed from a simple router to a configurable platform that can support unique organisational requirements, unifying the full communications experience.
of voice and data applications for users.

The Vehicle Area Network advantage

VANs provide network operators with significant advantages, for large events — whether foreseen or unforeseen — and during regular, day-to-day operations.

Large events

A stadium concert, wide-scale power outage or natural disaster can wreak havoc on cellular networks. First responders will need access to a highly resilient system like P25, DMR or perhaps a private LTE system. A Vehicle Area Network keeps officers connected to their most reliable network, even if they are using a mobile phone or tablet.

Operational efficiency

Public safety officers and utility workers must often drive significant distances just to file their daily reports. Imagine the benefit of replacing 30 minutes' travel time each way with an extra hour on task, by filing reports through a data application. The VAN can connect with the best available network to transmit the report efficiently. And where no data connectivity is available, it can store the report and complete the transmission when coverage is found without further input from the user.

A Vehicle Area Network can give users a simplified and unified experience. It gives the freedom to choose the right devices while maintaining connectivity to multiple networks. A VAN can provide your organization with improved connectivity and response capability during large-scale events while paying for itself with operational savings through daily business-as-usual improvements.

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The role of technology in overcoming Public Safety challenges Today’s police chief faces growing challenges from identity theft, organized crime, compliance costs associated with legislative change, ongoing budget constraints and the increasing use and cost of technology.

When asked how he was going to deal with these challenges, one police chief said “by using technology properly, I can keep officers on patrol, reduce my support costs and then have resources to deal with cybercrime”.

Identity Theft
Identity theft is the most visible and often the most commonly reported crime. It can have a devastating impact on those affected. Many police departments have set up cybercrime units, which have experienced some success. However, a lack of resources and increasing workloads limit their effectiveness. The borderless nature of the Internet means police agencies can also find themselves ill-equipped to investigate criminals who electronically prey on citizens from afar.

Increasing Organized Crime Activities
The increasing size, prevalence and sophistication of organized crime means that many law enforcement agencies are in an uphill battle to contain them. By recruiting tech-savvy members, organized crime entities have uncovered a lower-risk, higher-gain form of crime compared to physically committing robberies. Some local law enforcement agencies cannot match the resources of these organizations and therefore lack internal staff with sufficient knowledge to be effective.

Compliance Costs
Local law enforcement organizations face increasing compliance costs associated with security and anti-cybercrime legislation at both state and federal levels. Most of these new laws are unfunded mandates, which puts additional pressure on local budgets. Keeping up with these law changes becomes a significant task in itself.

Ongoing Budget Constraints
Grants previously available to law enforcement have significantly reduced as a result of budget issues and shifting political priorities. Local government
State government budgets have reduced through lower transfer payments from Federal government, increased social welfare costs and reduced sales taxes. Public expectation is that government will continue to provide the same services with smaller budgets. This constraint is felt most at the local public safety level because of its smaller size and because local government is more accessible to the public.

Increasing Use and Cost of Technology

Technology can assist public safety organizations in maintaining services within existing or lower budgets. IT systems can improve 911 dispatch services, integrated field-reporting systems can lower administration costs while providing field officers with more information, and purpose-built software can combat cybercrime. Local public safety agencies must also manage their own IT security. Unfortunately, these efficiencies and new tools whilst providing benefits, do come at a cost.

The Usefulness of Technology Partners

Most local law enforcement agencies have solid technology capabilities. However, staff are usually swamped with work, under-resourced and may struggle to keep their skills up to date in the fast changing world of cybercrime.

Employing an organization that already assists law enforcement agencies can be a cost-effective way to keep track of legislative changes and minimize compliance costs. In the event of major crime, or the agency itself being hacked, additional skilled resources e.g. in digital forensics can be valuable to the local team. Due to the borderless nature of cybercrime, an organization with an international presence may be better positioned to anticipate and head off cyber-attacks.

A close relationship with a trusted and competent technology partner can directly contribute to managing the issues faced by police chiefs. In a time of limited resources and hiring limits, technology partners can provide flexibility within a variable cost structure.

Partnerships are being realized as the most efficient way for police chiefs to stay abreast of technology, resource special emphasis units and provide effective police services with ever decreasing resources.

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The Rise of the Machines

By Paul Dixon

Drones. Robots in the sky overhead. For more than a decade, scenes of high-tech drones flying surveillance missions over the world’s hotspots and raining down death and destruction as required. In the past year we’ve seen a more lighthearted approach to the technology as Amazon’s Jeff Bezos demonstrated the on-line retailer’s proposed drone delivery service. Domino’s Pizza in the UK has run ads with drone delivered pizza and Lakemaid Brewery in Wisconsin has a Youtube video of its very own drone delivering a frosty 12-pack to a group of hard-working ice fishers out on the lake. The scenes from Afghanistan have been all too real, while the idea of airborne delivery in your neighborhood may be cute, but it’s a long way from being ready for prime time.
There are an increasing number of this new generation of aerial vehicles appearing in the skies over North America. They come in all shapes and sizes and go by a variety of names. “Drones” is the term that has seized the imagination of the media and the general public in describing a wide range of diverse and not necessarily closely related aerial platforms. To the people who build them and operate them they are known by a range of terms that more accurately describe their capabilities and limitations – Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), Unmanned Aerial System (UAS), Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) and in some cases, Pilot Optional. For the past decade the world has been focused on seemingly endless videos taken by aptly named Predators and Grim Reapers lurking high in the sky over Iraq, Afghanistan and other war zones, covertly surveilling activities on the ground and dispensing death and destruction as required. Often the “pilot” or controller of the machine is literally half a world away. 

In 2010, the US Department of Homeland Security started using a fleet of six Predator UAVs to patrol the entire US-Mexico border and in early 2011 Predators started flying the Canada-US border across the prairies. The Predators are used primarily for border integrity and sovereignty issues, but have also been used to assist other law enforcement agencies, federal, state and lock on a range of real-time incidents within their operational area. In a demonstration of potential uses of the technology, sensors
on several Predators were used to gather information on wildfires burning close to the border in Arizona and New Mexico earlier this year. The data was streamed in real-time to firefighting authorities. In 2010 and 2011, Predators were tasked to assist federal and state wildland firefighters by using their infrared sensors to collect information on wildfires burning across California, Arizona and New Mexico in areas adjacent to the border.

The Canadian military was using UAVs to support operations in Afghanistan, though not the Predator or its more lethal cousins. Whereas the high-flying Predator is controlled by operators that can be as far away as the continental US and relays its information to high-level headquarters, the CF was using smaller UAVs, initially the CU-161 Sperwer and then the CU-170 Heron. The information gathered by these UAVs was processed by CF personnel in Afghanistan, much closer to the operational areas than their US counterparts. Now that the Canadian mission to Afghanistan has been completed, the RCAF has expressed interest in acquiring its own Predators for use in its expanding role in asserting Canada’s arctic sovereignty. At a cost of $18–20 million per unit, the acquisition of a squadron of 10–12 units, along with the costs of maintenance, personnel and a myriad of other costs places it far down the list in a time of shrinking budgets. The Royal Canadian Navy has been using the Boeing Scan Eagle, much smaller than the Heron, to support anti-piracy patrols off Somalia and while assisting on the Libyan interdiction mission. The Heron added a level of flexibility to the warship it was operating from as unlike the ship’s helicopter it was capable of surveilling a suspect ship from a distance, all the while undetected as it streamed real-time video back to the ship’s control centre. The navy is anxious to continue its experiments.

Canada is taking a lead in the use of small UAVs in law enforcement. Constable Mark Sharpe of the Ontario Provincial Police has been a pioneer in the use of small UAVs. A life-long fan of radio-controlled aircraft,
Draganflyer X4-ES – Used by RCMP in rural and remote areas of Canada by collision reconstruction analysts and forensic crime scene investigators.

Photo courtesy Draganflyer

An unobstructed overhead view of a collision scene or crime scene can be critical to an investigation. The ability to quickly launch a small UAV and capture photos is invaluable in situations where a helicopter is not available.

Photo courtesy Draganflyer
he saw the possibility of coupling what was then emerging digital technology with a small flying platform. He put his experience with radio-controlled aircraft to work with his day job as a forensic identification officer, by testing and operating small RC UAVs equipped with digital cameras for crime scene photography. Today the OPP has UAVs at a number of rural detachments around Ontario, both the X-6 manufactured by Draganfly Systems of Saskatoon and the Scout, manufactured by Aeryon Labs of Waterloo, Ontario. At about $30,000 each, the small UAVs are cost-effective to operate.

The RCMP have embraced the same UAVs to support their forensic identification and accident reconstruction sections in rural and remote areas across the country. In Saskatchewan in 2012, the RCMP deployed a UAV on 99 occasions, with the time aloft averaging between six and seven minutes. The value that a series of high-res aerial photos adds to a major crime investigation or a serious crash investigation is priceless, especially considering that police helicopters are rarely available on short notice in remote areas and the cost of chartering a commercial helicopter is prohibitive.

A case from Saskatchewan in May of 2013 attracted world-wide media attention when a RCMP UAV was pressed into service to locate a driver who had wandered from the scene of a crash and was credited with saving his life. When police and responders first arrived on the scene, the driver had wandered off, dazed and confused. A brief cell phone conversation ensued, but he was unable to describe his surroundings. A foot search of the immediate area was unsuccessful and below-freezing temperatures made the situation even more dire. An RCMP identification tech deployed his UAV equipped with an infrared camera. The IR camera detected the man’s heat signature and he was found a kilometer away, curled up under some bushes beside a snow bank.

Police agencies operating UAVs in Canada do so under a Special Flight Operations Certificate (SFOC) issued by Transport Canada. The SFOC allows the UAV to be flown at a maximum altitude of 175 during the day and 100 feet at night. The UAV cannot be flown over people and the area must be blocked off. The SFOC allows for the UAV to be utilized for “operational flights to obtain digital aerial images and video to support investigations of serious collision and major crime scenes/incidents” or for flight testing, maintenance flights, flight training and demonstration flights.”

One subject comes up repeatedly when UAVs and police are mentioned in the same sentence is “surveillance.” The idea is that police in Canada are looking to use the UAVs they already have and convert them to surveillance roles. It is true that UAVs have been used in conjunction with ERT responses, but under circumstances that are already covered by the SFOC. An example would be using a UAV to conduct a reconnaissance flight of a rural property that would be difficult to approach on foot to determine if someone is hiding behind outbuildings or vehicles parked on the property. The utilization small UAVs in urban environments could prove tricky with the problem of maintaining contact with the UAV in a built up area. A recent story on Channel 7, New York City detailed the fate of a small hobby UAV that lost its way in the concrete canyons of Manhattan, bounced off a building and plummeted to earth narrowly missing several pedestrians.

Mishaps have also befallen Homeland Security, which grounded their entire fleet of Predators after one crashed into the Pacific Ocean off San Diego, as well as the New York Air National Guard which lost a MQ-9 Reaper in Lake Ontario during a training mission. In both cases there was no warning that anything was about to go wrong before the loss of a $20 million machine. There is also the matter of the classified data systems that may or may not be carried on either or both machines. In New York City, the owner of the hobby UAV was identified by the “selfie” he took with the unit’s video camera before launching it from his balcony. He is currently facing criminal charges of reckless endangerment.

Law enforcement is the prime customer for small UAVs in Canada, but there has been some interest from the firefighting community, both structural and wildcard. The use of small UAVs in close proximity to large conflagrations in urban settings would seem to be problematic, but there are a wide range of incidents where a UAV would be the right tool. In April of this year, the Fire Department of Sherbrooke, Quebec used a UAV from ING Robotic Aviation, to help assess the level of the river during spring flooding and more precisely determine the extent of the area affected. The University of Alaska-Fairbanks has used its Scan Eagle UAV to assist state firefighters by overflying huge wildfires and using their infrared sensors to provide an accurate assessment of fire boundaries when smoke is too thick and prevents aircraft from overflying the area.

Will the machines take over? Not now, that’s for sure. The sky may be the limit for UAVs, but it’s going to be a long time before Amazon starts delivering your Mother’s Day chocolates by UAV.
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Becoming a Director on APCO Canada Board of Directors

By Theresa Virgin

I have served on the Board of Directors of APCO Canada since 2009, when I was fortunate enough to be elected to the position of director. Since then, I have served as secretary, Wavelength contributor (editor position is separate), emcee, host, representative of Canada at international events, spokesperson, archivist and general dogsbody, all of which I have thoroughly enjoyed.

It takes approximately 3 hours a week, sometimes a lot more, sometimes less in order to complete tasks, research, write papers, organize or whatever. As this is a volunteer position, it is unpaid but it is my opinion that the benefits far outweigh the negatives.

The compensations I have received are first and foremost, contributing towards a common goal to enhancement of public safety communications – serving the people who supply, install and operate the emergency communications systems used around Canada from coast to coast to coast to border. I have met outstanding people in our business from around the world and still maintain some of those acquaintances to this day. I have been afforded the ability to travel, to see different cities and countries and to experience different ways of doing the same job, struggling through the same barriers and the same technological issues from country to country.

In 2014 we have positions for vice president (must have served at least one term as a director) and two director positions. The director’s positions are a two-year commitment. The vice-president position is a three-year commitment. The 2015 Board of Directors, are traditionally sworn in at our Annual General Meeting which this year will take place in Vancouver, British Columbia in November.

If you are interested in submitting your name please take the time to speak to any of our board members, who will gladly give you the low-down on what we do, and why we enjoy it.
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**Personal Reflection**

By Christopher Bennett  
Prepared for: Annette Patrick  
Agency: Waterloo Regional Police Service – Communications Branch  
Duration of placement: March 31, 2014 – April 30, 2014

For the month of April, I was fortunate enough to have been given the opportunity to complete my placement with the Waterloo Regional Police Service - Communications Branch. I could not have asked for a better group of people to work with, and to learn from. Going into it I was a little unsure as to what I would do. Part of me thought I would just spend the time watching and learning, which I would have been more than happy with. However, they allowed me to be extremely hands on.

After learning their computer aided dispatch system, policies, procedures, 9000 Codes, Niche Records Management System, etc. I was able to jump right in and put my knowledge and skills to the test. After taking the Oath of Secrecy, I was able to do everything from contacting various hospitals in the region and the OPP to put out an alert for a person of interest we were looking for, to assisting with priority NICHE, CFRO, and FIP checks for officers while en route to priority 1 calls.

I was truly amazed to see the amount of work communicators do as part of their job. It really is so much more than just taking calls and dispatching officers. Listening to the experiences and stories of individuals in the field is one thing, but being there front and centre and actually doing the job truly opens your eyes.

I was able to see first-hand all of the skills we were taught being used, as well as the importance of all essential competencies discussed by professors throughout the program!

I am so very appreciative of the opportunity I was given from Waterloo Regional Police Service as I know they went above and beyond in putting this placement together for me. I feel like this experience not only solidified the fact that this is a career I wish to pursue, but also allowed me to become better prepared moving forward in the application process. To have had that level of training throughout the month, and have been given the opportunity to do the things I was able to do, will certainly serve me well in the early stages of my career.

In furtherance, the training communicator I was paired with was incredibly knowledgeable. One of the main things I learned from her wealth of experience is, that as a communicator, we play a critical role in public and officer safety. That is something that should not be taken lightly. As such, it is important to be the type of person who will go above and beyond to get the job done. Even though there may be days where you’re in a bad mood and nothing seems to be going right, you are required to be at the top of your game because errors and/or lack of effort in doing your job can result in serious repercussions!

In conclusion, the training, advice, and hands on experience was invaluable. As a student moving forward in the application process and to have had practical training in a workplace setting with emergency/non-emergency call-taking, dispatching, NICHE Records Management System, and all policies and procedures specific to the service I wish to be a part of is incredible. I am more passionate than ever about this line of work, and am very glad to have had the pleasure of starting this whole process with Durham College, and have had the continuous guidance of the incredible faculty within the 911 Emergency and Call Centre Communications Program. I can see first-hand how this program is setting standards across the board for education related to emergency communications, and it is a goal of mine to stay involved with the college as an industry professional long after I graduate.

**About the Author**

Chris Bennett is 22 years old and just graduated from the 911 Emergency and Call Centre Communications Program at Durham College. He also hold a Police Foundations diploma. He was one of three student representatives on the 911 Emergency and Call Centre Communications Program Advisory Committee. He is also a Disaster Management volunteer with the Canadian Red Cross. He has a background in mental health, having worked for community care Durham’s COPE Mental health program as a summer student, and was also a Forensic Unit volunteer with Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences.
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