

The Canadian Hearing Society cautions Toronto Police Services about the use of Long Range Acoustic Devices at the G20

Toronto, ON (June 11, 2010) - Chief of Police Bill Blair reported on the acquisition of Long Range Acoustic Devices (LRAD) at the Toronto Police Services Board special public meeting today at 2:00.

Blair asserts that Toronto Police Services (TPS) intends to use the LRADs as communication devices only, for the purpose of making announcements, providing instructions or informing a large crowd, at a distance of 75 meters from any personnel; and that they are not intended to be used as a force option. At the same time Blair reports that TPS is not disarming the alarm function of the devices and should an emergent situation arise and only under the orders of the Toronto Incident Commander the devices may emit a sound burst, Blair reports, not to exceed five seconds, at an intensity maximum of 96 decibels that is "well below the level where damage to hearing can occur".

The Canadian Hearing Society cautions TPS about the use of the LRADs in two regards.

As a communication device:

The significantly low frequency sound energy of speech may be extremely intense at the level of the speaker's ear and those in close range because of the lack of directionality of the lower frequencies. There is a very real risk of hearing loss for the operator and others situated behind the device.

As a force option:

CHS does not support the use of any force option that could cause permanent hearing loss. Blair contends that the alert function of the device emits a sound burst of 96 decibels. If this is a valid statement, it is doubtful whether the device would even be audible at 75 meters amongst the noise of the crowd. A level of 96 decibels is slightly louder than a dial tone, and about the intensity of quiet jazz. Quiet jazz for even an hour would not be damaging. CHS suspects that the figure of 96 decibels is erroneous. If the true sound level was in excess of 110 decibels (A-weighted), as is more likely, then exposure for less than about 8 minutes would yield the maximum *weekly* dose of noise exposure. This means that workers in the crowd who are exposed to daily vocational noise should be taking several days off work. In addition, the long term effects of intense, short blasts are simply not fully understood.

The Canadian Hearing Society asks that Toronto Police Services reconsider the use of the LRADs at the G20 Summit, as the devices have the potential to pose a significant risk to the public's and TPS personnel's hearing.

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Backgrounder