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For immediate release

Tour a winter storm and earthquake resilient home: Canada's insurers contribute to Emergency Preparedness Week

The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR) invites members of the media to tour a winter storm and earthquake resilient home. As part of the insurance industry's ongoing commitment to educate Canadian homeowners about disaster safety, ICLR has once again chosen Emergency Preparedness Week (May 4-11) to unveil its latest home retrofit project, this time in Montreal, Quebec. The event marks the 10th anniversary year of the Great Ice Storm of January 1998.

Where: 68 Kingsley, Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec
When: Friday, May 9 at 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Paul Kovacs, Executive Director of ICLR, will conduct a media tour of the home. Says Kovacs: "Actions taken to make a home more resilient to natural catastrophes should reflect local hazard risk. All of Quebec represents an active zone for winter storm, and the Montreal corridor contains an active seismic zone. Homeowners living in these areas, and in other places in Canada that are subject to different extremes, can prepare now for hazards that will inevitably strike in the future."

The Montreal home retrofit includes:

- Installing a diesel generator as an alternative power source
- Putting in surge protection on bigger-ticket electronic items
- Fitting the meter with a natural gas seismic shut off valve
- Anchoring cabinets, office equipment, and bedroom furniture to walls
- Outfitting the washing machine with armoured water supply hoses
- Anchoring the hot water heater to the floor
- Securing pictures and mirrors to the walls
- Applying 3M Scotchshield safety UV film to windows
- Installing carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and providing a fire extinguisher
- Installing snow melt cables on roof edges and gutters to prevent the formation of ice dams
- Providing a disaster preparedness kit.

From late Sunday, January 4 to Saturday, January 10, 1998, freezing rain lashed eastern Ontario and southwestern Quebec before heading into Canada's Atlantic provinces. In Quebec, 100 millimeters of freezing rain ravaged Montreal and parts of the province's south shore. By January 18, 25 Canadians were dead.

Emergency crews worked around the clock responding to reports of trees pulling down hydro poles and ice toppling transmission pylons. In Quebec, 1.4 million customers lost

electrical power – translating into roughly three million people or half the province's population. At the storm's height January 9, more than 10 per cent of Canadians were without electricity.

On Friday November 25, 1988, the largest earthquake in eastern North America in 53 years occurred just south of Chicoutimi, Québec. Referred to as the Saguenay earthquake, the temblor registered 5.9 on the Richter scale. Though there was no loss of life as a result of the event, some property damage was reported, particularly to older unreinforced masonry structures. In Montreal East, the former City Hall suffered serious damage to the masonry cladding.

According to Kovacs: "We can prevent natural hazards from becoming disasters if people undertake simple, appropriate preventative measures beforehand. Such actions and measures are affordable and take little time to do. We showcase them today in this home."

This is the sixth year that ICLR has retrofitted an existing home as part of Emergency Preparedness Week. In 2007, a home in Edmonton was retrofitted to protect against tornado and winter storms. In 2006, a home in Ottawa was made more resilient to earthquakes and winter storms. In 2005, a home in Vancouver was made more resilient to earthquakes, and in 2004, a Halifax home was protected against hurricanes. In 2003, a home in London was made more resilient to tornadoes. The Institute has also retrofitted several child care centres as part of its "Protecting our Kids from Disasters" program.

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Established in 1998 by Canada's property and casualty insurers, ICLR is an independent, not-for-profit research institute based in Toronto and at the University of Western Ontario in London, Canada. ICLR is a centre of excellence for disaster loss prevention research and education. ICLR's research staff is internationally recognized for pioneering work in a number of fields including wind and seismic engineering, atmospheric sciences, water resources engineering and economics. Multi-disciplined research is a foundation for ICLR's work to build communities more resilient to disasters.

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