



**May 8, 2006**  
**For immediate release**

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

The Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR) invites members of the media to tour an earthquake and winter storm-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 7-13) to unveil its latest home retrofit project, this time in Ottawa, Ontario.

**Where:** 1875 Juno Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario

**When:** Wednesday, May 10 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. The Ottawa-St. Lawrence Valley represents one of three of the most seismically active areas in Canada. Additionally, the area is regularly hit with several severe winter storms. Homeowners can prepare now for hazards that will inevitably strike in the future."

The Ottawa home retrofit includes:

- Anchoring cabinets, office equipment, and bedroom furniture to walls
- Bracing TV stands, televisions and refrigerators with appliance straps
- Outfitting the washing machine with armoured water supply hoses
- Anchoring the hot water heater
- Securing pictures to the walls
- Applying safety and security film to windows
- Installing a gas shut off valve at the gas meter outside the house and encasing the meter in a cage to protect it
- Insulating pipes to prevent them from freezing
- Installing snow melt cables on roof edges and gutters to prevent the formation of ice dams
- Installing carbon monoxide and smoke detectors and a fire extinguisher
- Reinforcing the front and rear doors.

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There are about 1,500 earthquakes recorded in Canada each year. While the most seismically active area in Canada is the west coast, damaging earthquakes of up to Richter magnitude 7 have occurred in or near the Ottawa/St. Lawrence Valley region. In October 1990, the area was shaken by a 5.0 on the Richter scale, and on January 1, 2000, by a 5.2. On February 24, 2006, an earthquake measuring 4.5 on the Richter scale struck the area.

The National Capital Region receives an average of about 225 centimetres of snow each year. However in winter 1996/97, 324.6 centimetres of snow fell. The area is also susceptible to ice storms. At Christmas 1986, freezing rain left one in four Ottawa-area homes without power, and more than 85 millimetres of freezing rain fell in the area as a result of the Great Ice Storm in 1998, causing significant damage. The average January temperature in Ottawa is -10.8 degrees Celsius, making the city the second-coldest national capital in the world, after Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

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 fourth year that ICLR has retrofitted an existing home as part of Emergency Preparedness Week. 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, Ontario 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.

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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