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**For immediate release**

**Forest City included in nationwide roll out of national program to safeguard  
Canadian kids against natural disasters**

LONDON, ONTARIO – A national program designed to protect youngsters in childcare centres has been unveiled in London, Ontario by the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR).

In addition to childcare centres in Toronto, Winnipeg and Halifax, ICLR staff and volunteers have retrofitted two facilities owned by London Bridge Childcare Services. 3M Canada has assisted ICLR with this important project by providing, at a reduced price, its 3M™ Scotchshield™ Safety and Security Window Film. Applied to glass for protection from high wind, vandalism, theft and high impact, it helps prevent injuries caused by broken window glass.

The driving force behind the program -- *Protecting our kids from disasters* -- is to ensure that childcare centres are retrofitted to become better equipped to withstand the effects of natural disasters. Retrofitting can include such modifications as bolting bookcases and water tanks to walls, securing ceiling lights and hanging fixtures.

"One of the common misconceptions is that disasters either happen somewhere else or to someone else," says Paul Kovacs, Executive Director of ICLR. "It's a fact that natural disasters are occurring more frequently and with increasing severity, and every Canadian is at some risk," he says.

In addition, ICLR will provide, free of charge, a complete "how to" manual, complete with video, to any childcare centre interested in carrying out its own voluntary retrofitting.

In the early 1980s, the average cost of natural disasters to taxpayers and insurance companies averaged about \$100 million per year. These costs have been doubling every five to ten years. Three of the most expensive natural disasters in Canada's history have occurred within the last six years, including the 1998 ice storm in Eastern Ontario and Quebec. The total private and public cost of that unexpected disaster

amounted to more than \$5.5 billion.

"Beyond the economic losses is the sad reality of the human toll caused by natural disasters," Kovacs says. "ICLR is committed to helping Canadians develop a better understanding of natural disasters, and we're starting with Canada's most vulnerable citizens -- our children."

"We are delighted with the support provided by the ICLR," says Ian Gibb, Director of London Bridge -- one of several childcare centres in Canada to be equipped by ICLR with non-structural modifications to its equipment, furniture and supplies. "The ICLR initiative will serve to assist us in ensuring the children in our care have better protection."

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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