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**For immediate release**

**ICLR launches national program to safeguard Canadian kids  
against natural disasters**

TORONTO, Ontario – A national program designed to protect youngsters in childcare centres is being launched today by the Institute for Catastrophic Loss Reduction (ICLR).

The driving force behind the program – *Protecting our kids from disaster* – is to ensure that child care centres are retrofitted and consequently become better prepared 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.

ICLR staff and volunteers will be retrofitting five childcare centres across Canada in the coming months. 3M Canada will be assisting ICLR with this important project by providing at a reduced price, its 3M™ Scotchshield™ Safety and Security Window Film, which protects children from flying glass.

In addition, ICLR will provide, free of charge, a complete "how to" manual, complete with video, to any child care 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. A recent example is 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 that the ICLR has provided," says Delene Spragge owner of Little Tots Manor, the first childcare centre in Canada to be equipped by ICLR with non-structural modifications to its equipment, furniture and supplies. "The assistance provided by 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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