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For immediate release

Tour a wind, winter storm and blackout 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 wind, winter storm and blackout 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 3-9) to unveil its latest home retrofit project, this time in Toronto, Ontario.

Where: 84 Martin Grove Road, Etobicoke, Ontario
When: Wednesday, May 6 at 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Paul Kovacs, Executive Director of ICLR, will conduct a media tour of the home. Says Kovacs: "Toronto, indeed much of Ontario, represents an active zone for winter storms, high winds and excessive rainfall. What's more, any one of these perils could contribute to a prolonged power outage. Homeowners living in the GTA, 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 Toronto home retrofit includes:

- Installing a natural gas-powered generator as an alternative power source
- Putting in surge protection on bigger-ticket electronic items
- 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
- Upgrading existing glass with 3M safety and security film.
- 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.

A major storm in the GTA on August 19, 2005 marked the costliest natural catastrophe in Ontario history, the second most expensive on record for the country. On that day more than 150 millimetres of rain fell on parts of Toronto in a three-hour deluge that impacted a wide swath of real estate from Kitchener-Waterloo to Durham Region. Two tornadoes set down in the Salem/Fergus, Ontario, area, damaging several properties, and a rare tornado warning was issued for Toronto.

The now-infamous blizzards of January 1999 dropped 78 centimetres of snow on Toronto and area less than two weeks after the region was hit with 40 centimetres. The

year's worth of snow in just two weeks shut down parts of the Toronto Transit Commission and GO Transit system and left thousands stranded.

On October 1954, Hurricane Hazel buffeted the GTA with winds of more than 110 kilometers an hour and dumped over 280 millimetres of rain in just a 48-hour period. Hundreds of people in the Toronto area were left homeless and 81 people lost their lives. It was the highest level of precipitation recorded in a 12-hour period anywhere in Ontario, a record that still holds today.

The blackout of 2003 represented a massive power outage that occurred throughout parts of the Northeastern and Midwestern United States, and in Ontario on Thursday, August 14, 2003. It was the largest blackout in North American history, affecting an estimated 10 million people in the province of Ontario and 40 million people in eight U.S. states. In some parts of the U.S., power was not restored for four days.

According to Kovacs: "We can prevent natural hazards from becoming disasters by taking appropriate preventative measures now. The actions showcased in this home are affordable and easy to implement."

This is the seventh year that ICLR has retrofitted an existing home as part of Emergency Preparedness Week. In 2008 a home in Montreal was retrofitted to protect against winter storm and earthquake, and 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 child care centres across Canada 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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