

Emergency Preparedness for Industry and Commerce Council (EPICC)

Vancouver, B.C. - February 25, 2008

Welcome address by Bruce Drake

Executive Director, Pacific Region, Industry Canada

Thank you, Larry. Good morning, everyone.

It takes vision and a lot of hard work to avoid becoming a statistic of the wrong sort. And it takes knowledge.

Many of you here today are taking that important first step to acquire this knowledge. Some of you are here because you have taken many steps, but recognize the need to continuously expand your knowledge and preparations.

Whatever your level of readiness I would like to commend you and the organizations you represent for taking advantage of the resources EPICC has put together for you, and for engaging now rather than after the fact to do what is right for your organization, your employees and, in certain cases, what is right for shareholders.

Warren Buffett might as well have been talking about BCP when he said, “After all, you only find out who is swimming naked when the tide goes out.” I won’t be as colourful as Warren Buffett this morning, but I am passionate about the leading role my department plays in making BCP possible.

One of Industry Canada’s mandates is to ensure that Canadians have access to communications networks that help organizations — such as yours — remain viable when disaster hits. How do we do that?

When we think back on historic events — on major accidents, acts of terrorism and natural disasters — each instance has highlighted the importance of communications.

Obvious examples come to mind, but I’ll stay close to home for the sake of brevity...

- The Kelowna Fires of 2003
- The West Coast winter storm, 13 months ago

Or further afield: the eastern Canada Ice Storm.

Effective communications in today’s Networkworked Economy is critical for both public and private-sector organizations to continue to operate in unplanned situations and emergencies. If networks go down, things we take for granted are not always available to us — phones, cash and credit processing, computers, medication, even food. Economies such as our own are wealthy, in part, due to specialization and the economies of scale made possible by advanced communications and transportation systems.

We all become better and better at more refined specializations or as an engineering friend puts it: “We know more and more about less and less until we know everything about nothing”.

Our specialization is not a problem so long as we can ensure our systems work — or if they fail — that we understand what alternatives exist. Without functioning networks, our efficiencies and capacities can decline rapidly and catastrophically.

When “just in time” becomes “no idea when”, we all face serious challenges.

In times of emergency, Industry Canada’s highest priority is to collaborate with telecommunications companies to facilitate rapid repair, replacement and expansion of telecommunications systems. That’s for emergencies: but a lot of work, forethought and collaboration helps make this possible.

Industry Canada’s Emergency Telecommunications team works closely with federal and provincial emergency measures organizations and the telecommunications industry throughout Canada. On an ongoing basis. Together, we develop best practices in emergency planning and foster important links within the telecommunications community. Through this collaboration, we develop national programs, establish mutual aid agreements and plans, and provide coordination assistance for emergency telecommunications in response to a crises or disasters.

You can well imagine that the federal Department of Public Safety is a very important partner in this process and in times of emergency.

In today’s society, security doesn’t just mean securing the buildings and equipment. It also includes securing networks from cyber threats and vulnerabilities.

To complement our strengths in the emergency preparedness and physical protection areas, Industry Canada — through the *Canadian Telecommunications Cyber Protection Working Group* — works in collaboration with the telecom industry to address cyber threats, vulnerabilities and terrorism and to promote industry-to-industry, government-to-industry, and industry-to-government co-operation to protect Canadian networks and those of our partners.

Protecting Canada’s telecommunications networks is a job too big and too important for any one company or government to undertake, and in a mixed economy no one should suffer under the comforting illusion that either on its own can guarantee reliable results.

In emergency situations, access to these networks and the services they provide save lives and protect asset value. Securing these networks is thus of paramount importance to Canadians and to the Canadian economy.

Just as a telecommunication system is a network, so are all of the organizations that not only respond in times of need or crisis but support and rebuild once the danger has passed.

Collaboration between stakeholders — all levels of government, industry, non-profit organizations, emergency-response organizations — is the key to success in support of

business continuity. In particular, of course, collaboration is what EPICC is all about, and we at Industry Canada applaud the work EPICC does.

From a business continuity perspective, it is important to understand what types of communications technologies exist in the marketplace, what your organization currently uses and its ability to function in times of emergency. This, of course, is a constantly evolving field and options frequently change. Land lines, cell phones, satellite phones, amateur radio, internet, VOIP telephony — the more diverse your communications options are, the more likely your organization can continue to function or to recover quickly after the event.

As the EPICC event program reminds us, “Continuity of Business is Everybody’s Business.”

If you would like more information on Industry Canada’s role in emergency telecommunications, please do speak to our staff in the exhibitors’ area — Cindy Jeromin, Kim Mikkelsen and Michael Krenz are here today and for the duration of the Forum.

Cindy, Kim, Michael — please identify yourselves.

In closing, I would like to take a moment to thank Larry Pearce, Chair of EPICC Forum 2008 Organizing Committee, for this opportunity, and to thank all of the others who are contributing to make this event a success.

I hope you will find all of the sessions over the next three days both productive and beneficial to your organization.

Thank you.