



# **Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2019 Budget**

**By: Conrad Sauvé  
President & CEO  
Canadian Red Cross**

## Recommendations

The Canadian Red Cross (CRC) recommends that the Government of Canada support the operationalization of the proposed *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada* by making an investment of \$70 million over five years including:

1. **Community-based volunteer capacity:** Improving the capacity and coherence in the delivery of face-to-face emergency assistance, including psychosocial first aid, by building on CRC's existing volunteer base to support disaster affected Canadians. CRC is the only national voluntary organization with consistently trained, tested and pre-positioned emergency response volunteers from coast-to-coast-to-coast, and represents the most comprehensive and diverse set of emergency response capabilities of any organization within the Canadian voluntary sector.
2. **Improved state-of-the-art technology:** Leveraging on-going modernization to support the digitization of emergency services, including the delivery of fast, accurate, borderless and accountable electronic cash assistance to disaster-affected Canadian households, businesses and community organizations through CRC Emergency Management Information System (EMIS) - the only one of its kind in Canada.
3. **Enhanced preparedness capacity, including in Indigenous communities:** Applying evidence-based approaches to promote the development of household and community preparedness through engagement tools, training and planning support, including leveraging CRC's existing relationships with over 330 Canadian Indigenous communities to support capacity-improvements.

## Context

Recent data shows that 63% Canadians have been personally affected by a natural disaster, a number that is only expected to increase as extreme weather events become more frequent and widespread. Recent flooding in New Brunswick and British Columbia, as well as wildfires in Indigenous communities in Northern Manitoba remind us that we must be ready to respond to the needs of disaster-affected Canadians wherever they might be located. Furthermore, we know these needs must be addressed quickly and comprehensively to minimize their economic impacts on individuals and households, and to ensure that small businesses and community organizations are sustained as engines of economic recovery once evacuation orders are lifted.

As disasters continue to grow in size and frequency they increasingly cross municipal, provincial or even federal boundaries, as do disaster-affected populations seeking shelter with family and friends outside the impacted area. In the 2016 Alberta Wildfires more than 24% of disaster-affected households registered post-evacuation addresses outside the province. Yet the current emergency management system usually requires that disaster-affected people travel to select urban distribution points, wait in line and register on paper to receive what is usually in-kind assistance in the form of a hygiene kit or meal voucher. This approach has limited scalability, particularly given the lack of nationally-standardized training which impedes inter-provincial transfer of personnel, and is incongruent both with human dignity and the realities of a mobile population.

The draft *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada* envisions a different reality – a reality in which communities have the resources and skills needed to robustly mitigate and prepare for disasters, as well as the capacities to respond to and recover from them when they prove unavoidable. Yet this effort cannot be undertaken without engaging a Whole-of-Society approach including leveraging the robust capacities of CRC.

## Canadian Red Cross

CRC is proud to be an emergency response partner to nine provinces, more than 1,000 local governments, and over 330 Indigenous communities. We leverage the power of Canadians to help each other in times of need through innovative technology and a consistently-trained, scalable volunteer network that is pre-positioned in vulnerable communities. CRC is unique among the voluntary sector in Canada: it not only holds a distinct status as Auxiliary to Government, but also has unparalleled, tested capacity and capabilities to deliver scalable, timely and accurate assistance to Canada's disaster-affected people, responding to a total of 2,977 emergencies and assisting more than 132,000 disaster-affected Canadians last year alone. And yet as the draft Emergency Management Strategy notes, much more work remains to be done for Canada to be ready to address the increasing frequency and severity of disasters.

As the Prime Minister noted during his 2017 visit to fire-affected communities in British Columbia:

*"I have had the opportunity to travel across the country in times of difficulty and times of distress. From Lac-Mégantic, to the High River floods, to Fort McMurray, to places where families have been battered by floods in the Prairies and Central Canada and always, every time the Red Cross is there. The Red Cross is there to support families, to help people through difficult times."*

## **Solution**

CRC is proposing an enhanced partnership with the Government of Canada to support stronger community resilience through pre-positioned, expertly trained and routinely engaged volunteers; to leverage technology to reach and serve Canadians faster in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with households and communities to increase their preparedness and resilience to some of Canada's most common hazards.

### **Link to the Theme of Economic Growth: Ensuring Canada's Competitiveness**

A partnership between CRC and the Government of Canada will ensure that the economic impacts of disasters are minimized by protecting and recovering the productivity of individuals, families and entire communities, therefore retaining growth and ensuring competitiveness moving ahead.

CRC's Support to Small Business program for the 2016 Alberta Wildfires was critical to the economic recovery of the community, providing financial assistance to more than 2,000 small business owners, struggling with a total of more than \$116 million in disaster-related losses. Thanks to CRC's technology and robust network of expert personnel, financial assistance for small businesses was quickly and accountably distributed, minimizing the long-term economic impacts of this event and revitalizing economic growth.

*"As a home-based business, when your home is destroyed there are many things to handle.... The funding provided by the Red Cross allowed me to quickly replace business cards, office supplies, and other items that I needed to operate and get the word out to clients that I was still here."*

– Small business owner affected by 2016 Alberta Wildfires

A recent economic study of the 2016 Wildfires response also highlights a 40% reduction in operational costs by mobilizing CRC's expertly trained volunteer network.

CRC knows that its unique technology, volunteer network and expertise is integral to its success, and believes that these capacities – leveraged through a partnership -- can be fundamental to the success of the draft *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada*. To expand upon its evidence-based, tested capacities, CRC requires a predictable, stable commitment from the Government of Canada. Together, we can work to protect Canadian families and communities, mitigate the economic impacts of disaster and return these communities to their pre-event levels of economic growth.

## **PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL**

A five-year, \$140 million joint investment is being proposed to further leverage the strengths of CRC and our network, as an integral part of the *Emergency Management Strategy for Canada*. This partnership would include a total of \$70 million of federal funding to be invested in three core areas: disaster response and catastrophic planning; digital registration and assistance platform; and household and community preparedness.

### **1. COMMUNITY-BASED VOLUNTEER CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT**

By building on the CRC's existing base of community-based volunteers we can ensure that vulnerable communities have dedicated, consistently-trained and routinely engaged volunteers that can deliver household and community preparedness education; support the in-person delivery of emergency assistance (including psychosocial first aid) and support the community through recovery. By being consistently trained, volunteers can also be deployed across provincial boundaries to provide simple surge support in large disasters.

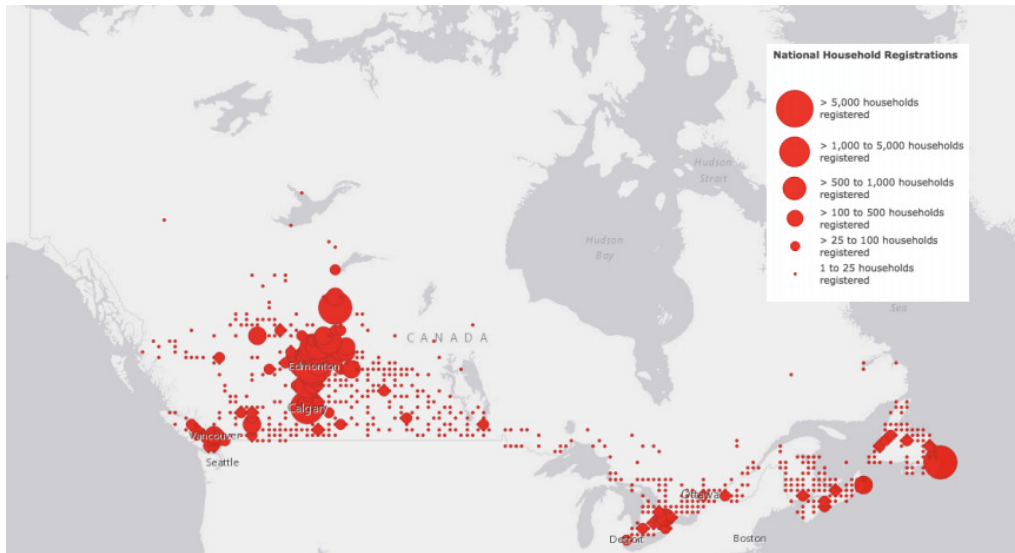
CRC is the only national voluntary organization with consistently trained, tested and pre-positioned emergency response volunteers from coast-to-coast-to-coast, and represents by far the most comprehensive and diverse set of emergency response capabilities of any organization within the Canadian voluntary sector. This funding would enable CRC to:

- Almost double the number of trained community-based volunteers from 7,000 to 12,000, with a higher concentration in high risk areas, including 500 Indigenous community-based responders.
- Augment CRC's capacity enabling the organization to provide 500,000 people with emergency response and recovery supports including 25,000 people with emergency shelter. This support includes consideration for people with disabilities, elderly and cultural requirements.
- Pre-position equipment and stock in high-risk communities.

### **2. DIGITAL REGISTRATIONS & ASSISTANCE PLATFORM: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM**

Together we can enable the ongoing modernization and digitization of emergency services, including delivery of fast, accurate, borderless and accountable electronic cash assistance to disaster-affected populations through CRC Emergency Management Information System (EMIS) - the only one of its kind in Canada.

Version One of EMIS has been used in all large operations since the 2016 Alberta Wildfires, and has proven to be integral in enabling online registrations of disaster affected households, thus presenting a comprehensive picture of the identities, locations and needs of the disaster-affected population as well as providing e-transfers of financial assistance to eligible, verified households. Experience has demonstrated that while community-based volunteers are necessary to serve some of the most vulnerable, roughly 80% of disaster-affected Canadians can be served in the immediate aftermath of a disaster through this kind of scalable, timely and borderless emergency assistance.



**Fig. 1. A map of the locations of households displaced by the 2016 Alberta Wildfires, following registration in the CRC EMIS system.**

In order to maximize its effectiveness EMIS needs a further investment to ensure the system is robust, adequately supported, and more easily used by households, small businesses and community organizations. This includes:

- A secure platform to streamline the sharing of registrant information with partners such as governments and select community organizations;
- A client portal to enable clients to log-in, update their information, communicate with the CRC in real-time through chat, book appointments with case workers, and receive reliable and targeted information and referrals relevant to their particular location;
- Extended capabilities to enable the registration of affected small businesses and community organizations, currently housed in distinct systems;
- A growth in the capacity of the CRC to support EMIS, including strengthened capabilities for client contact centres to support clients without digital access; data management (including fraud, data cleaning and de-duplication) and ready-trained field personnel to support in-person registrants;
- Further technical capabilities, including for off-line and mobile, improved intuitive user experience, strengthened security measures, and improved flexibility of design to deal with extraordinary events such as terrorist attacks or mass arrivals of asylum seekers.

### **3. HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS**

Through a partnership we can leverage evidence-based approaches to promote the development of household and community preparedness, using engagement tools, training and planning support, including substantial capacity-improvements in partnership with Indigenous communities. To do this we can build upon CRC's existing relationships with over 330 Canadian Indigenous communities.

Indigenous communities are disproportionately affected by natural disasters such as floods and forest fires. Natural emergencies, many of which are annual occurrences, create additional stress and trauma for communities and exacerbate existing social and health inequalities. This funding will enable the development of community preparedness through engagement tools, training, and planning support, including investment in capacity-improvements in Indigenous communities.

- Enhancement of personal preparedness capacity including education and other disaster risk reduction initiatives. When not engaged in response, CRC volunteers support local preparedness and risk mitigation ensuring that Canadian individuals, families and entire communities are stronger, safer and more resilient when disaster strikes;
- Application of evidence based approaches to reducing the impacts of major threats at household and community level for vulnerable populations, including through Flood Safe and Fire Safe programming;
- Improving our collective understanding of risk through strategic communications including social media and innovative tools as message delivery options.

#### **A SHARED INVESTMENT OVER FIVE YEARS**

	<b>Government of Canada</b>	<b>Red Cross Fundraising</b>	<b>Total Joint Investment</b>
<b>Community-Based Volunteer Capacity Development</b>	\$49,500,000	\$35,000,000	\$84,500,000
<b>Digital Registration and Assistance Platform</b>	\$9,100,000	\$3,900,000	\$13,000,000
<b>Household and Community Preparedness</b>	\$3,900,000	\$1,100,000	\$5,000,000
<b>Emergencies responses activities</b> (Assistance for Under-Funded Minor Disasters such as House Fires)	-	\$22,500,000	\$22,500,000
<b>Standard Overhead Cost (12%)</b>	\$7,500,000	\$7,500,000	\$15,000,000
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$70,000,000</b>	<b>\$70,000,000</b>	<b>\$140,000,000</b>