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Risk of flooding in Manitoba: Insurance Bureau of Canada offers Manitoba residents tips to prevent water damage in their homes

VANCOUVER – March 22, 2010 – Spring has officially arrived, along with expectations of flooding in the Red River Valley. Insurance Bureau of Canada (IBC) reminds homeowners in Manitoba that while overland flooding is not covered by insurance, there are steps they can take to protect their belongings from water damage.

“There are steps homeowners can take to make sure the annual spring thaw won’t put their properties in danger,” said Lindsay Olson, Vice-President, British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, IBC.

To help prevent water damage during the spring thaw:

- Move valuable items located in basements to higher ground
- Keep floor drains clear of obstructions
- Install a sump pump; if you already have one make sure it’s in working order
- Install a sewer backflow valve to prevent water from entering the home
- Ensure that there is proper grading around your home

Olson encouraged all individuals living in areas that are in danger of flooding to take the proper measures to protect themselves and their loved ones. Early preventive action is especially important because any damage caused by overland flooding or water seeping into the residence cannot be covered by home insurance.

“The purpose of insurance is to spread risk among many policyholders,” said Olson. “But overland flooding is a risk for only a small percentage of the population – that is, those who live in a flood plain. Since most homeowners are not exposed to this risk, and should not share in the cost, providing flood insurance would be unaffordable for the homeowners who might need it.”

She added: “However, some potential damage from flooding may be the result of sewer backup. Coverage for this type of damage is available, but must be purchased as an add-on to a homeowner’s policy.”

The Red River is expected to peak in Winnipeg in early April, two weeks earlier than usual. While it is predicted that recent warm, dry weather and early spring run-off will result in average or below-average water levels similar to 2006, there is still the possibility of flooding comparable to 2009 levels if there is significant warm or wet weather in the next few weeks.

The provincial and municipal governments have made significant investments in flood protection and awareness in recent years to minimize damage caused by flooding. And after considerable flooding in 2009, the province has put extra measures in place to ensure the highest state of readiness for flooding this spring.

Still, homeowners shouldn't wait until a flood is affecting their area to review their home insurance policy and contact their insurance representative to verify what coverage they have. If you have questions or concerns about home, car or business insurance, please contact IBC's Consumer Information Line at 1-877-772-3777 or visit www.ibc.ca.

About Insurance Bureau of Canada

Insurance Bureau of Canada is the national industry association representing Canada's private home, car and business insurers. Its member companies represent 90% of the property and casualty (P&C) insurance market in Canada. The P&C insurance industry employs over 110,000 Canadians, pays more than \$6 billion in taxes to the federal, provincial and municipal governments, and has a total premium base of \$39 billion.

To view news releases and information, visit the media section of IBC's website at www.ibc.ca.

For more information, contact Lindsay Olson at 604-684-3635.