

# Exercise Coastal Response 2023 Joint Executive Summary



Photograph By Karen Kasmauski



Ministry of  
Emergency Management  
and Climate Readiness



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## Message from the Offices Scheduling the Exercise



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As Deputy Ministers of Emergency Management and Climate Readiness (EMCR) and Public Safety Canada (PS) we are proud to share the Exercise Coastal Response 2023 (CR23) Joint Executive Summary. Exercising for response to a catastrophic earthquake enhances overall preparedness for this provincial and national risk and remains at the height of priorities of both federal and provincial emergency management agendas.

The National Priority Exercise (NPE) was delivered between February 7 to 9, 2023, being jointly planned and conducted by PS and EMCR. To the greatest extent possible, CR23 was designed to simulate the challenges of a magnitude 6.8 earthquake at the 96+ hour mark of the continuous integrated emergency response phase.

The simulated event took place in the Lower Mainland and eastern Vancouver metro area, with significant damage to infrastructure and impacts on the population. NPE CR23 was the culmination of over three years of planning and involved approximately 200 whole-of-society partners from across the Emergency Management (EM) community in Canada. Involved partners included 22 First Nation and local authority representatives, 16 provincial ministries and agencies, 28 federal departments and agencies, 10 industry and private sector partners and four non-governmental organizations. Hundreds of federal and provincial players, from the operational to the strategic levels (Deputy Ministers, Assistant Deputy Ministers, and Director Generals) participated in this capstone activity.

This Joint Executive Summary has been produced to provide an overarching review of CR23 as it relates to strategic level issues and cross government coordination. The document highlights the collaboration between the federal and provincial exercise planners in the design and robust delivery of a jointly planned catastrophic earthquake response exercise. It also highlights recommendations that will inform the development and conduct of future national exercises, improvements and better practices to benefit the entire EM system, and collective lessons identified from CR23.

Together, we would like to thank all of those who were involved for their work and participation in this important emergency management preparedness exercise and we look forward to future collaborations.

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# Introduction

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## *Purpose*

The Joint Executive Summary is produced to provide an overarching review of Exercise Coastal Response 2023 (CR23) as it relates to strategic level issues and cross government coordination. The document highlights the collaboration between the Government of Canada and the Government of British Columbia in the design, development, and delivery of a jointly planned catastrophic earthquake response exercise.

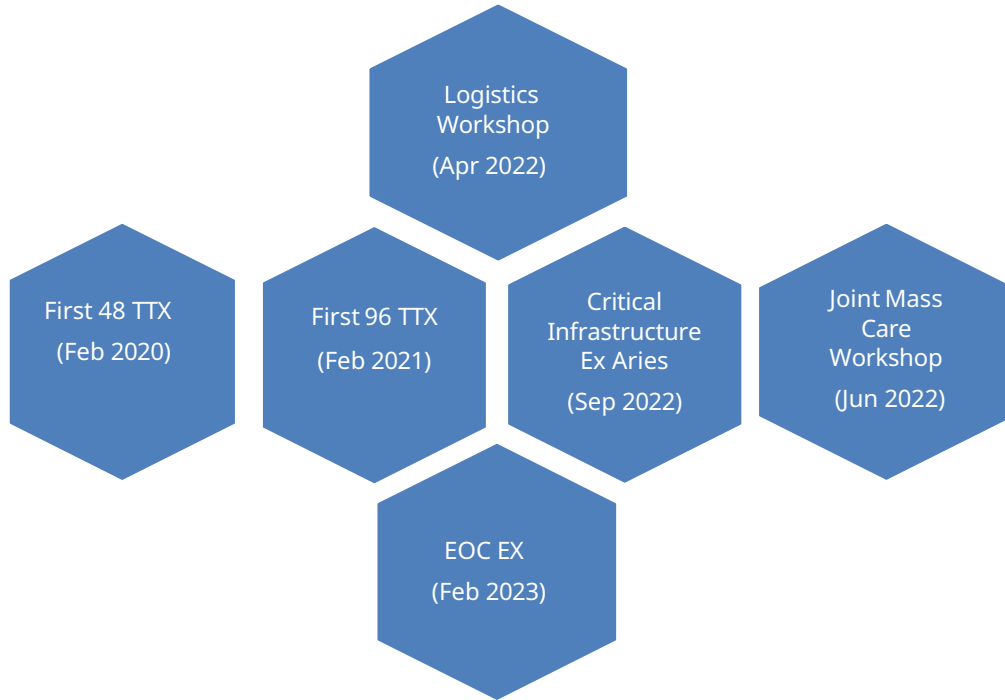
## *Exercise Aim*

To practise strategy, coordination and communication through an integrated whole of government and partners' response to a catastrophic BC earthquake event.

## *Exercise Design & Development*

Co-designed and developed by the Government Operations Centre (GOC) and Emergency Management and Climate Readiness BC (EMCR) since October 2018, Exercise Coastal Response 2023 (CR23) was conducted from 7 to 9 February 2023. The exercise involved participation by governments, communities, First Nations, industry and private sector partners, utilities, and non-governmental organizations. CR23 was centered on responding to an earthquake impacting the Lower Mainland at the 96+ hour mark. This afforded the training audiences an opportunity to test and validate existing provincial and federal plans and procedures in response to a major earthquake.

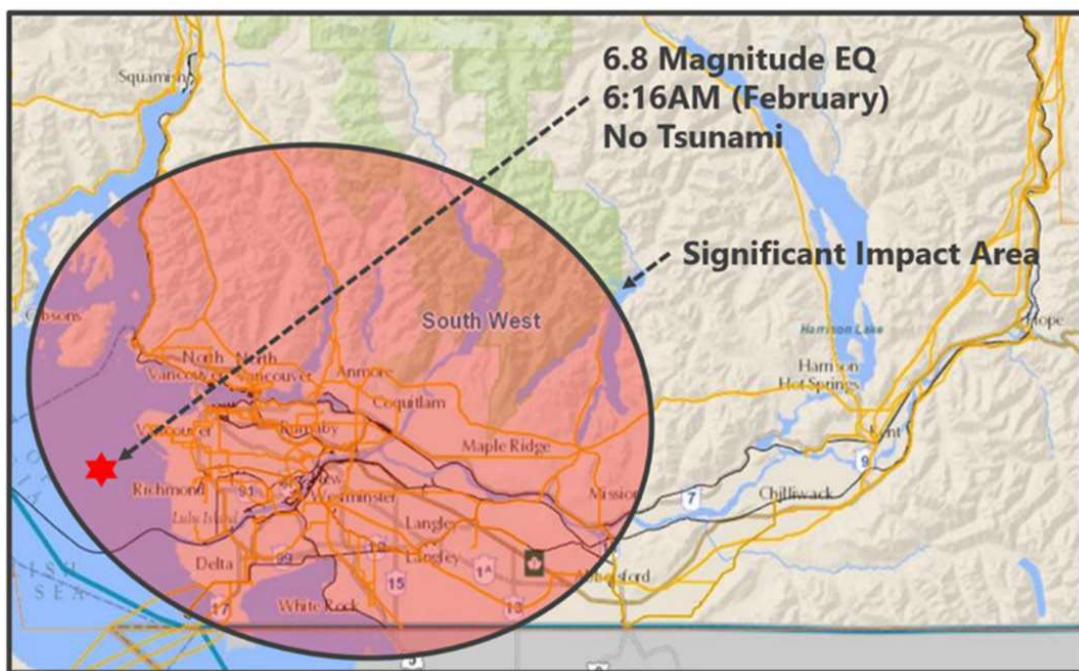
The joint design of the exercise incorporated a succession of building block (BB) activities, including Tabletop Exercises (TTX) and workshops. The exercise was designated as a National Priority Exercise (NPE) for the federal departments and agencies, and significant planning and coordination between the federal and provincial planning team was initiated. During the development stages of CR23 the Province of British Columbia faced multiple significant disasters including 2019 wildfires, the pandemic and the atmospheric river events in 2021, requiring postponement of the capstone exercise until February 2023. Through federal and provincial coordination, training audiences were combined for many of the building blocks activities, in addition to other pre-exercise activities conducted independently by partners. BB activities are included in the following diagrams:





## Exercise Scenario

In the early morning hours on February 3, 2023, a simulated 6.8 magnitude earthquake occurred approximately 12 kilometers northwest of Tsawwassen, BC. The duration of the earthquake lasted over one minute but it did not generate a tsunami. The earthquake was strongly felt in most areas of southwestern BC. The affected area directly impacted the Lower Mainland, where approximately three million people reside. Serious damage was reported in Greater Vancouver and strong aftershocks were felt. The event caused widespread damage to critical infrastructure, and older buildings and structures. Casualties were significant with many killed and injured. Thousands of people were also displaced from their homes.



The scenario was designed and developed by Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) to provide a realistic event. The scenario described an earthquake causing significant impacts, creating a scenario that would challenge participants while not completely overwhelming them, to allow for a coordinated provincial and federal response. Communications pathways remained intact for training purposes. This approach created the best opportunity to train and develop responses to problems encountered during CR23.

## *Scope*

The exercise involved the participation of emergency operations centres (EOCs) represented by: municipal, regional, provincial, First Nations, federal government, select private sector, and non-governmental organizations. Each EOC activated and staffed their respective operations to manage disaster response structures within their respective jurisdictions while simultaneously coordinating with other EOCs and departments/agencies to meet exercise objectives.

Federal and provincial senior leadership and governance structures were convened before, during and after exercise play in February 2023 for strategic decision-making appropriate to the exercise scenario, as required within their respective organizations.

## *Exercise Objectives*

During the exercise planning process, it was agreed amongst the federal and provincial core planning teams that a common set of overarching exercise objectives would be established. Participating ministries, departments and agencies would develop their own objectives to fit within the overarching objectives. The organizations included in the primary training audience were included as part of the exercise design team.

These organizations also created the injects and materials to support the achievement of their objectives as well as an examination of their individual and shared response plans. There were six overarching exercise objectives both at the Federal, and provincial governments.

Federal Overarching Exercise Objectives	Provincial Overarching Exercise Objectives
<p>1. <b>Continuity of Government:</b> Practice the Government of Canada’s ability to maintain and deliver essential federal services to relevant partners, including the decision-making process related to cross-government and inter-governmental business continuity / continuity of operations and service delivery.</p>	<p>1. <b>Continuity of Government / Business Continuity:</b> Identify, develop, and test government/business continuity and succession planning at all levels.</p>
<p>2. <b>Critical Infrastructure:</b> Examine the key information requirements to support the identification of interdependencies and the prioritization of restoration of critical Infrastructure.</p>	<p>2. <b>Critical Infrastructure / Damage Assessment:</b> Practice prioritization for the restoration of critical infrastructure.</p>
<p>3. <b>Logistics:</b> Examine components of logistical planning and supply chain management activities, including inter-agency coordination, to meet requirements following a catastrophic event.</p>	<p>3. <b>Logistics:</b> Practice and validate evolving provincial logistics concept of support, to operationalize Section 8 of the Provincial Earthquake Immediate Response Strategy (PEIRS).</p>
<p>4. <b>Senior Leader:</b> Practice the Government of Canada’s ability to organize an immediate and effective Emergency Management governance structure to facilitate timely and effective decision-making and response.</p>	<p>4. <b>Strategic Decision Making:</b> Practice decision- making, communication, and coordination for complex issues requiring immediate action to reduce disaster risk.</p>
<p>5. <b>Public Communications:</b> Examine plans, policies and/or capabilities for coordinated communications with appropriate partners and the public.</p>	<p>5. <b>Strategic Communications:</b> Conduct joint communications and engagement, with a focus on consistency of public information.</p>
<p>6. <b>Mass Care:</b> Orient plans, policies and / or capabilities for the Government of Canada’s support to provincial response activities during an event requiring mass care.</p>	<p>6. <b>Mass Care:</b> Develop / practice mass care response concepts.</p>

## *Exercise Delivery & Daily Hotwash Activities*

The exercise play took place in multiple locations across BC and Canada concurrently. Most players participated in their respective EOCs or offices. Interaction between players was conducted virtually or in- person, accordingly. Player action commenced at the 96+ hour mark of the response phase. To ensure players were prepared to respond from this point onwards, a series of “warm start” activities, including the issuing of situational reports, were provided to players starting February 3, 2023. At the end of the exercise play on each day, a player hotwash was facilitated by venue controllers and evaluators. On Friday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, a final hotwash was conducted at the joint federal/provincial/territorial (FPT) staff to capture immediate exercise observations and lessons learned from as many participants as possible.

Overall control of the exercise was conducted virtually from Exercise Control (EXCON) Main at the EMCR headquarters in Victoria, BC and EXCON FED was established in Ottawa, Ontario. Organization-specific activities were controlled from venues such as the GOC in Ottawa, the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) in Saanichton, and the Provincial Regional Emergency Operations Centers (PREOCs) in Surrey and Kamloops.

# Exercise Evaluation

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## *Methodology*

All participating organizations were afforded the opportunity to evaluate all or part of their catastrophic response activities. This report, however, contains a summary of the higher-level issues identified with a focus on key issues regarding the joint federal-provincial response to a catastrophic event. Both governments followed an evaluation process, gathering and analyzing observations established against the exercise objectives. Using data collected from evaluator observations, exercise hot washes and CR23 surveys, this joint initiative presents the initial findings of CR23 from the GOC and EMCR. To do so, it first shares initial perspectives from the provincial and federal lead evaluators. Second, it summarizes three primary storylines of CR23: emergency management governance structures; the Request for Federal Assistance (RFA) process; and logistics planning. Third, it provides high level observations based on the overarching exercise objectives.

## *Initial Observations*

### **Provincial Perspectives (Lead Evaluator)**

CR23 provided significant value to the participating organizations. It was evident that the preparations for the exercise, and the exercise itself, have increased preparedness in BC for a disaster event on the scale of a catastrophic earthquake. The professionalism of the exercise planners was perceptible during the preparations for CR23, and during the exercise execution. Further, the professionalism of the participating organizations demonstrated some of the strengths and advantages that BC can rely on in future real-life emergency events. However, the exercise also served to highlight areas where significant preparedness challenges remain, including logistics and humanitarian assistance.

### **Federal Perspectives (Lead Evaluator)**

CR23 was advantageous for all departments and agencies that participated in the exercise. Staff were given the opportunity to practice emergency procedures and emergency plans were assessed with the scenario and emergency management working relationships were forged. Building block (BB) activities were highly relevant, with many of the findings factoring into key storylines during the national priority exercise.

BB #6 (Logistics & Supply Chain Management) revealed gaps in commodity prioritization, multimodal transportation, warehousing, staging areas, and community points of distribution. With fuel being integral to logistical operations, these factors explain why critical fuel shortages were a primary point of discussion during CR23. Areas for improvement, such as enhancement to the provision of mass care to Indigenous communities were identified in BB #8 (Mass Care and Indigenous Collaboration) and remain relevant.

## Key Points

### Overarching

- CR23 successfully brought together approximately 200 whole-of-society partners from across the Emergency Management community in Canada to work on catastrophic earthquake planning and response.

### Emergency Management Governance Structures

Federal and provincial emergency response plan governance models were activated to varying degrees. Provincially, committee participation was represented by EMCR executive and included briefings and discussions around response requirements. Interaction between the strategic decision-making structure (Deputy Ministers' Emergency Committee and Assistant Deputy Ministers' Emergency Committee) and operational execution through the Provincial Emergency Coordination Centre (PECC) need to be exercised and refined routinely to ensure efficiency. Within the federal government, this included the Director General Event Response Committee (DG ERC), the Assistant Deputy Minister Crisis Cell (ADM CC), the Deputy Minister Emergency Management Committee (DM EMC), the Federal Coordination Group (FCG) and the Federal Communication Coordination Calls.

- The need for well-established multi-jurisdictional/agency coordination capability spanning federal and provincial response and recovery organizations was noted and was required for a sustained response. Different concepts for a coordination model were discussed, including further governance collaboration between PS, as lead under the Federal Emergency Response Plan (FERP), and the Province. The possible creation of a new and independent governance structure is an area for future federal and provincial discussion.
- Emergency management working groups were seen as invaluable tools. They effectively gathered information regarding critical federal/provincial fuel requirements, capabilities to support the first RFA and stood up working groups on the respective elements efficiently. Working groups were established for both the federal and provincial governments, including opportunities to integrate where appropriate.
- While the activation and engagement of the Whole-of-Government emergency management forums represented a strength of the exercise, some concerns were raised regarding the close proximity of senior level meetings and duplication of information. Exercise players expressed difficulties with preparing to brief up and having the necessary bandwidth to actively participate in meetings.
- Exercise design at the GOC and Federal government included DG, ADM and DM meetings daily, over the short time span of the exercise, which presented challenges for situational awareness products and some duplication of effort.

## Request for Assistance

- The first RFA, was submitted the first day of the exercise for assistance in water, food, humanitarian assistance, and other necessities, and was approved in a timely fashion. The resources provided were sufficient and covered enough of the needs that the process was deemed successful.
- The second RFA focused primarily on the procurement, storage, and distribution of diesel, gas, and aviation fuel. Unfortunately, the submission of this RFA was delayed at the Federal regional and provincial staffing, which did not allow players to fully play out the scenario as it pertained to the second RFA. At the Federal regional level, a considerable amount of time was absorbed through the discussion of the second RFA. The type and extent of assistance required was not immediately understood and caused a requirement for several conversations and requests for information. During the process it was determined that questions around a complex issue such as fuel, were not easily answered and readily available in terms of a broader request for assistance.
- The dichotomy with the first RFA being timely and the second RFA being delayed suggests that additional consideration should be given in advance by all parties to resources like fuel which are more difficult to resolve during an emergency. Rather than waiting for an emergency to occur, information on fuel needs and fuel reserves should be established prior to emergencies. Departments are cognizant of their fuel consumption, and this awareness must be shared with partners as part of emergency preparedness.
- It was observed that though the RFA process is well defined, there were challenges relating to familiarity and key information needs in executing it in the province. The RFA process and discussion at federal and provincial EOCs was responsive to the exercise inputs and approval processes.
- Following CR23, federal and provincial partners expressed a desire to engage on whether it would be feasible and helpful to develop agreements, such as, Memorandum of Understanding's (MOU), outside of the RFA process, for the federal provision of timely and critical lifesaving supports, potentially leveraging the use of staging areas at various levels.

## Logistics

- CR23 allowed new concepts and capabilities such as the Federal Emergency Logistics Plan (FELP) and the integration of the Humanitarian Workforce Program to be tested. The opportunity to exercise the FELP and assess its alignment with *BC's Provincial Earthquake Immediate Response Strategy* was especially important. Following the exercise, it was determined that further work is needed to refine and socialize the FELP's role among partners as the "single window" approach for logistics coordination between the federal and provincial governments. Consequently, it will be important to implement lessons identified from CR23 and continue developing the FELP based on observations and input from partners.
- CR23 identified the need for additional scoping and attention to a Logistics Plan for the preliminary and sustained response phase to ensure critical and life sustaining resources are prioritized and moved into the impact area using all available modes of transportation and infrastructure. BC Wildfire Services (BCWS) established a Regional Staging Area (RSA) at Vancouver International Airport which provided some valuable insight into some of the tactical considerations which will be incorporated into future planning. Scoping this plan be a significant undertaking requiring partnership and collaboration across all levels of government, and the private sector. The Province may consider assigning a lead ministry for catastrophic logistics to lead planning efforts, define roles and responsibilities of other key ministries and partners, and resource accordingly to execute the Plan.
- Many departments and agencies saw the value of CR23 as a learning opportunity by testing internal procedures related to logistics and using the exercise to identify areas of improvement. The provision of water, mass care and food following a catastrophic earthquake represents a significant logistical challenge and links into humanitarian assistance operations. There is a need to better integrate NGOs such as the Canadian Red Cross and St. John's Ambulance into the development of operational plans as they provide significant capacity and experience in this area.
- There is a pressing need to clarify logistics decision-making protocols between departments, ministries, and agencies. As an example, the recipients of the limited fuel resources that would be available for distribution during an emergency have not been clearly articulated in advance, and the receipt of critical resources directly relates to the sustainment or restoration of critical infrastructure such as telecommunications.
- In a response to a catastrophic earthquake, federal and provincial governments may consider the establishment of a push model for critical lifesaving and sustaining commodities whereby established minimum aid packages are mobilized following the catastrophic event, based on prior agreements, without the requirement for detailed and formal requests.



## Observations by Exercise Objective

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### General

Each of the six overarching exercise objectives were examined to varying degrees dependent on the participating audiences' capacities and identified training objectives. The details provided below utilize a descriptive analysis covering both federal and provincial strengths, gaps, opportunities, and areas for improvement.

## Continuity of Government/Business Continuity:

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**Continuity of Government / Business Continuity** – Practice Government ability to maintain and deliver essential federal and provincial services to relevant partners, including the decision-making process related to cross-government and inter-governmental business continuity/continuity of operations and service delivery.

### Summary

#### Strength:

- (P) Significant Ministry confirmation of BCP process and procedures
- (F) High level of engagement and participation in the exercise from players, with many departments testing internal plans

#### Area for Improvement:

- (P) Examine and test complex issues for BCP including communication and alternate sites
- (F) Understanding of roles and responsibilities under the FERP during emergencies

#### Opportunity:

- (P) Enhance cross government and Ministry BCP programs to increase resiliency
- (F) Further developing our emergency relationships with regional and provincial partners

#### Gap:

- (P) Test the provincial continuity of government protocols in future catastrophic earthquake exercises
- (F) Further involvement of FN and Indigenous communities in NPEs

Legend: P= Provincial and F= Federal

## Strengths

- (P) Provincial ministries and agencies were able to complete their required annual validation of business continuity.
- (F) Responses in the CR23 participant feedback survey cited detailed exercise materials as a key factor in producing engagement and realism.
- (F) Survey results illustrated that exercise materials were done well, with 57% of respondents indicating that exercise materials were effective and an additional 21% indicating they were extremely effective.

## Gaps

- (P) Due to limiting the provincial exercise scope for the exercise, Continuity of Government was not exercised.
- (F) With 204 First Nations in BC, and over 85% of the Indigenous population in the province living in urban centers, the impact of the earthquake on Indigenous communities would be significant. CR23 focused on FN and Indigenous communities by designing injects directly related to comments brought up by representatives in planning sessions and particularly during BB#8: Mass Care and Indigenous Collaboration Workshop, which was put on to entirely focus on this crucial element. Further translation of these issues into future exercise design and incorporation into player activity will be beneficial for continued focus on the complexities involved with responding to emergencies involving these communities.

## Areas for Improvement

- (P) Future exercises need to build on the established baseline for cross ministry business continuity and examine complex plan elements including movement to alternate sites and utilization of secondary means of communications.
- (F) On one hand, hotwash activities revealed that the understanding of roles and responsibilities related to a catastrophic earthquake increased as CR23 progressed with the exercise being identified as especially useful for new staff when paired with an experienced mentor.
- (F) On the other hand, hotwash participants reported some confusion regarding roles and responsibilities during emergency response. For emergency support functions, it was unclear as to which department was responsible for items such as food and water (it is Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada).

## Opportunities

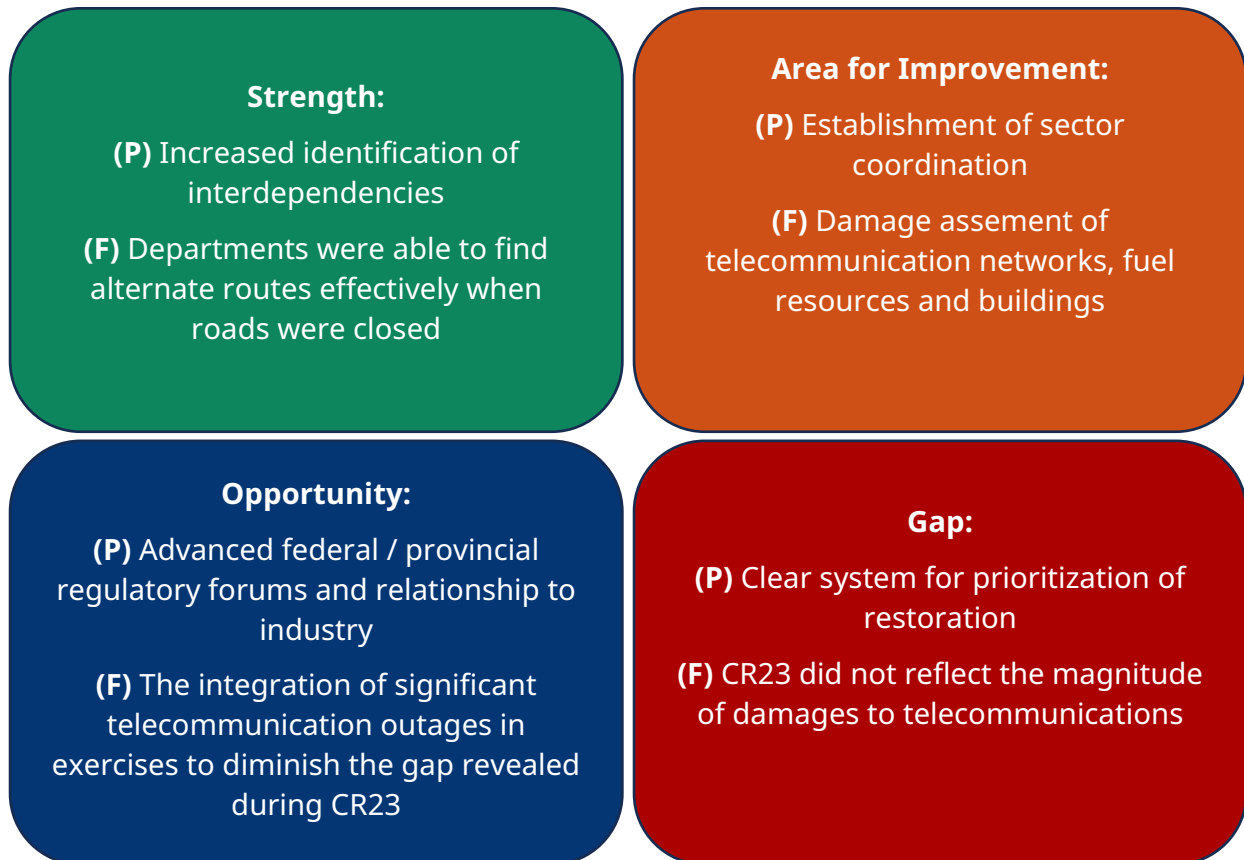
- (P) Broaden ministry and agency participation in BCP exercises to improve their overall resiliency.
- (F) Further development of emergency relationships between federal, provincial, and regional partners will improve coordination during an emergency and by extension the ability to maintain and deliver essential services.

# Critical Infrastructure

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**Critical Infrastructure (CI) / Damage Assessment** – Examine the key information requirements to support the identification of interdependencies and the prioritization of the restoration of critical infrastructure.

## Summary



Legend: P= Provincial and F= Federal

## Strengths

- (P) CR23 broadened the appreciation and understanding of the interdependencies among CI sectors during a catastrophic event.
- (F) The opportunity for key CI players to interact and communicate with Government of Canada systems created by the exercise helped to identify interdependencies, build relationships, and establish alternate routes of transportation when damages were sustained to infrastructure.

## Gaps

- (P) There is a requirement to establish a clear process for the assessment and prioritization of restoration of CI.
- (F) Prioritization system to restore critical infrastructure, including telecommunication networks and key data centers of impacted departments.
- (F) Lines of communication are essential to emergency response. Emergency management departments should revisit telecommunications outages and establish clear contingency plans.

## Areas for Improvement

- (P) There is a requirement for each of the CI sectors within the province to have dedicated leads who maintain and manage the priority contacts within the sector and can function as a point of contact for the designated federal counterpart.
- (F) Condition of telecommunication networks, fuel resources and impacted buildings were not assessed fully. The exercise highlighted that there is a need for more exercises focusing on CI to better prepare the federal response.

## Opportunities

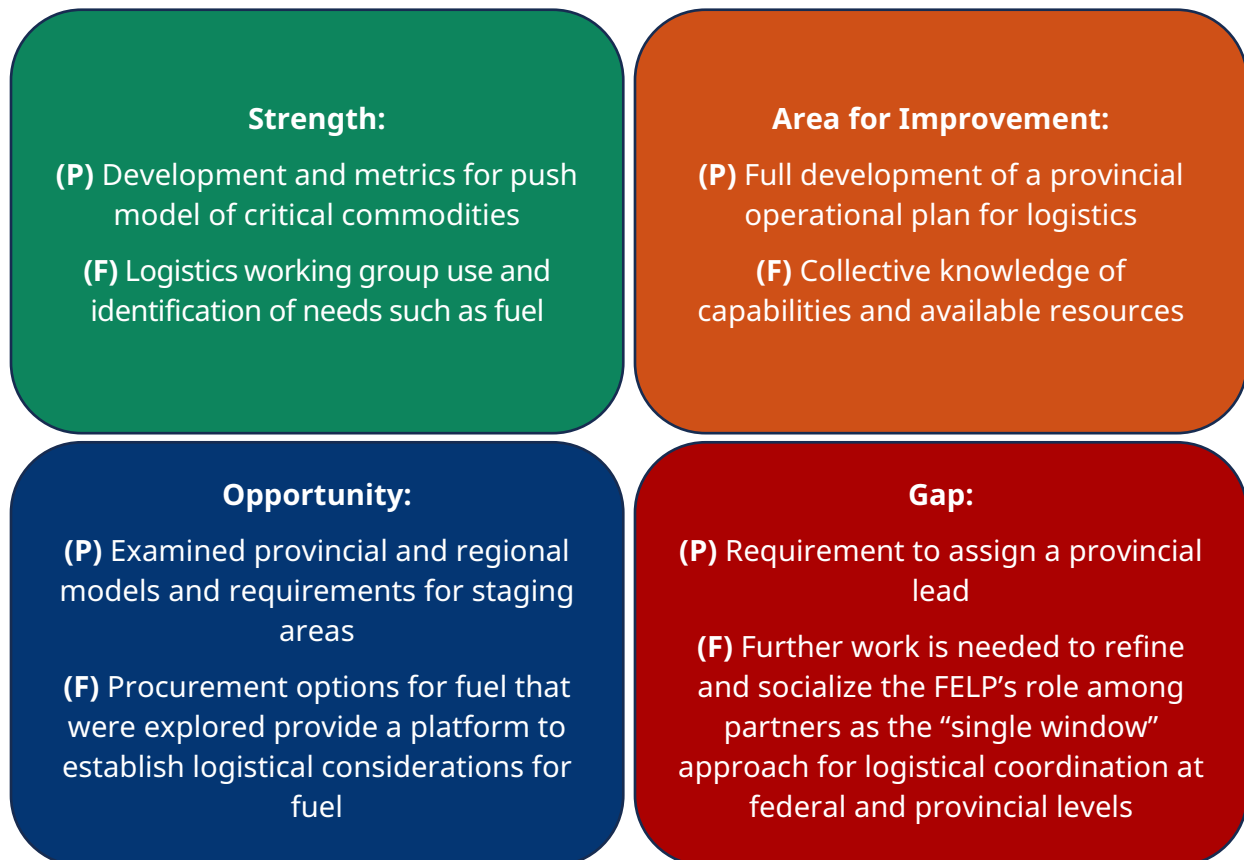
- (P) Numerous regulatory forums currently exist across both federal and provincial jurisdictions and provide a platform for engagement within those CI sectors. Awareness of these forums assisted with increasing situational awareness.
- (F) The integration of significant telecommunication outages in exercises, to diminish the gap revealed during CR23, represents a tangible opportunity for improvement.
- (F) While many participants highlighted the utility of an exercise inject simulating a telecommunications outage, the usage of SAT phones during the exercise revealed technical and procedural issues, demonstrating the need for more testing of alternative communication protocol.

## Logistics:

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**Logistics** – Examine components of logistical planning and supply chain management activities, including inter-agency coordination, to meet requirements following a catastrophic event.

### Summary



Legend: P= Provincial and F= Federal

### Strengths

- (P) The exercise provided a platform to examine the metrics and estimated quantities and commodities for "push" during the immediate response.
- (F) Logistics working group meetings were conducted throughout the exercise and provided an effective and immediate platform for information exchange (i.e., the critical fuel shortages).

## Gaps

- (P) Currently there remains no provincial lead for logistics planning able to coordinate with all partners to develop a comprehensive plan and procedures for use during a catastrophic event.
- (F) Given that the FELP was a new plan and was being initially tested as part of CR23, further work is needed to refine and socialize the FELP's role among partners. Exercise players reported unfamiliarity with the FELP in participant feedback surveys, which was to be expected.

## Areas for Improvement

- (P) Expand and build out the concepts for a comprehensive operational logistics plan incorporating partners in government and the private sector.
- (F) Knowledge of departmental capabilities and available resources could be improved. For example, outside of the refineries and LNG sites, there was poor visibility on where stores of gasoline and diesel were located, and by whom these were managed.

## Opportunities

- (P) Information gathered through the examination of requirements for provincial and regional staging areas will help contribute to the development of an operational logistics plan.
- (F) Information on quantity and types of available fuel resources in the event of an emergency could be collected and shared with partners.

# Senior Leaders / Strategic Decision Making:

**Senior Leaders / Strategic Decision Making** – Practice the Government’s ability to organize an immediate and effective Emergency Management governance structure to facilitate timely and effective decision- making and response.

## Summary

<p><b>Strength:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(P) Significant engagement of EMCR senior executive contributing to improving processes</li><li>(F) Having senior leaders and DM-level participants contributed to realism</li></ul>	<p><b>Area for Improvement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(P) Broaden cross-ministry participation in exercises to examine governance and decision-making post a catastrophic earthquake</li><li>(F) Understanding and coordination of RFA process across government</li></ul>
<p><b>Opportunity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(P) Strengthen processes through conduct of future exercises</li><li>(F) There is a strong interest to incorporate Ministerial involvement in future EM exercises</li></ul>	<p><b>Gap:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>(P) Clear protocols for the linkage between strategic decision making and provincial operations coordinated through the PECC</li><li>(F) Clear decision-making protocols between departments when communication</li></ul>

Legend: P= Provincial and F= Federal

## Strengths

- (P) EMCR senior executives were fully engaged throughout the exercise and provided invaluable feedback related to potential requirements for future governance and coordination models.
- (F) Having senior leaders and DM-level participants playing contributed to realism, enabling a better training environment.



### Gaps

- (P) There is a requirement to establish clear protocols for the linkage of strategic decision making and guidance to the operational level for the coordination of response and recovery actions.
- (F) Clear decision-making protocols between departments when communication networks are inoperable.

### Areas for Improvement

- (P) Broaden cross-ministry participation in exercises to examine governance and decision-making.
- (F) Common understanding of emergency support functions, roles, and responsibilities under the FERP for senior leadership remains a concern. Where mandate lines are blurred, approach should be nimble, and agencies should lean in.

### Opportunities

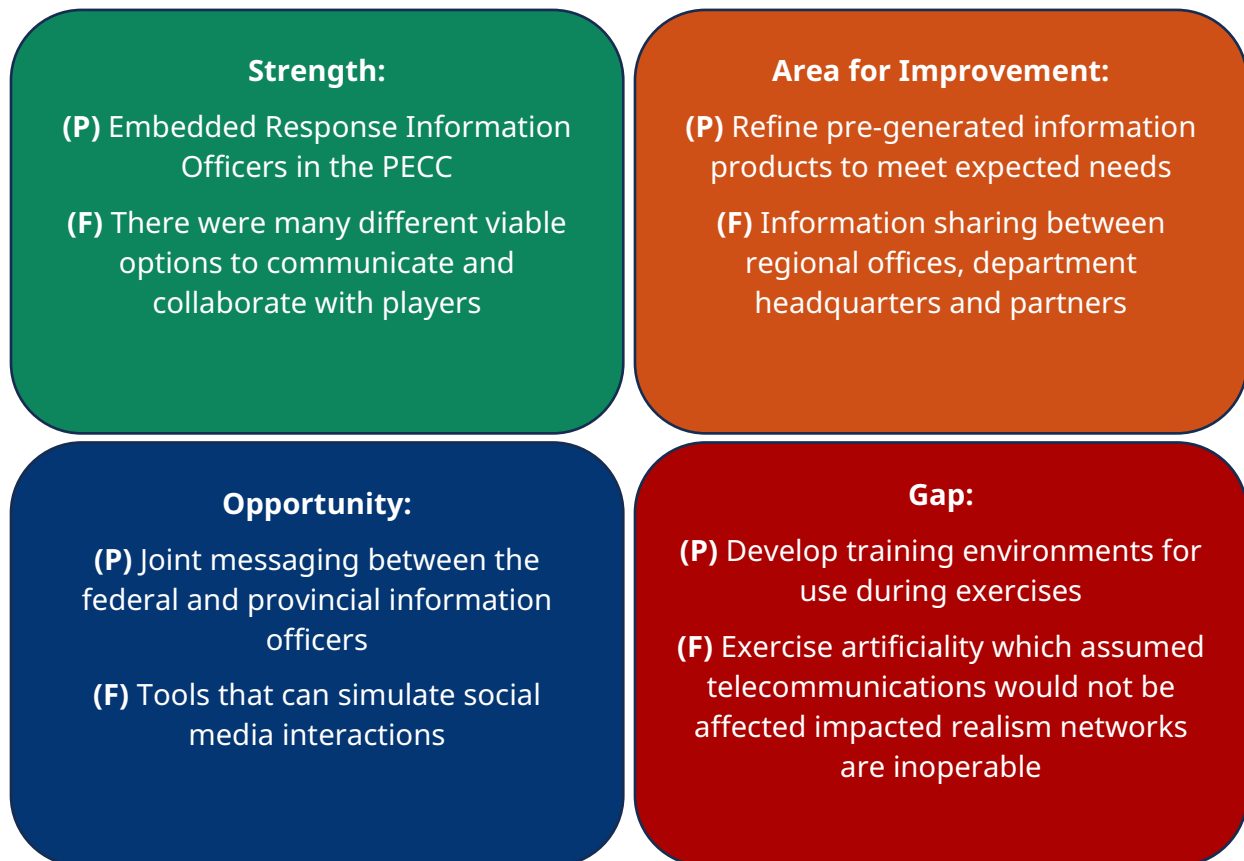
- (P) Strengthen decision making models and process through the conduct of future EM exercises.
- (F) There is a strong interest to incorporate Ministerial involvement in future EM exercises.

## Public Communications:

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**Strategic Communications** – Examine plans, policies and/or capabilities for coordinated communications with appropriate partners and the public.

### Summary



Legend: P= Provincial and F= Federal

### Strengths

- (P) Embedded Response Information Officers in the PECC reinforced the importance of information management and distribution of public emergency messaging.
- (F) There were many different viable options to communicate and collaborate with players such as emails, MS Teams, phone calls, in person collaboration and regular communication coordination calls. Hotwash results demonstrated the importance of these tools for conflict resolutions.

## Gaps

- (P) Develop training environments for use during exercises, to allow for the confirmation and validation of public messaging in a controlled environment.
- (F) Exercise which assumed telecommunications would not be affected caused the simulated exchange of information with the public to lack realism. Public communications were still tested effectively, but exercise participants felt it was one dimensional at times.

## Areas for Improvement

- (P) Refine pre-generated information products to meet expected needs.
- (F) Information sharing between regional offices, department headquarters and key partners could be timelier and more precise. Participant feedback surveys, hotwash activities and evaluator observations identified a lack of clarity surrounding what needed to be shared and how.

## Opportunities

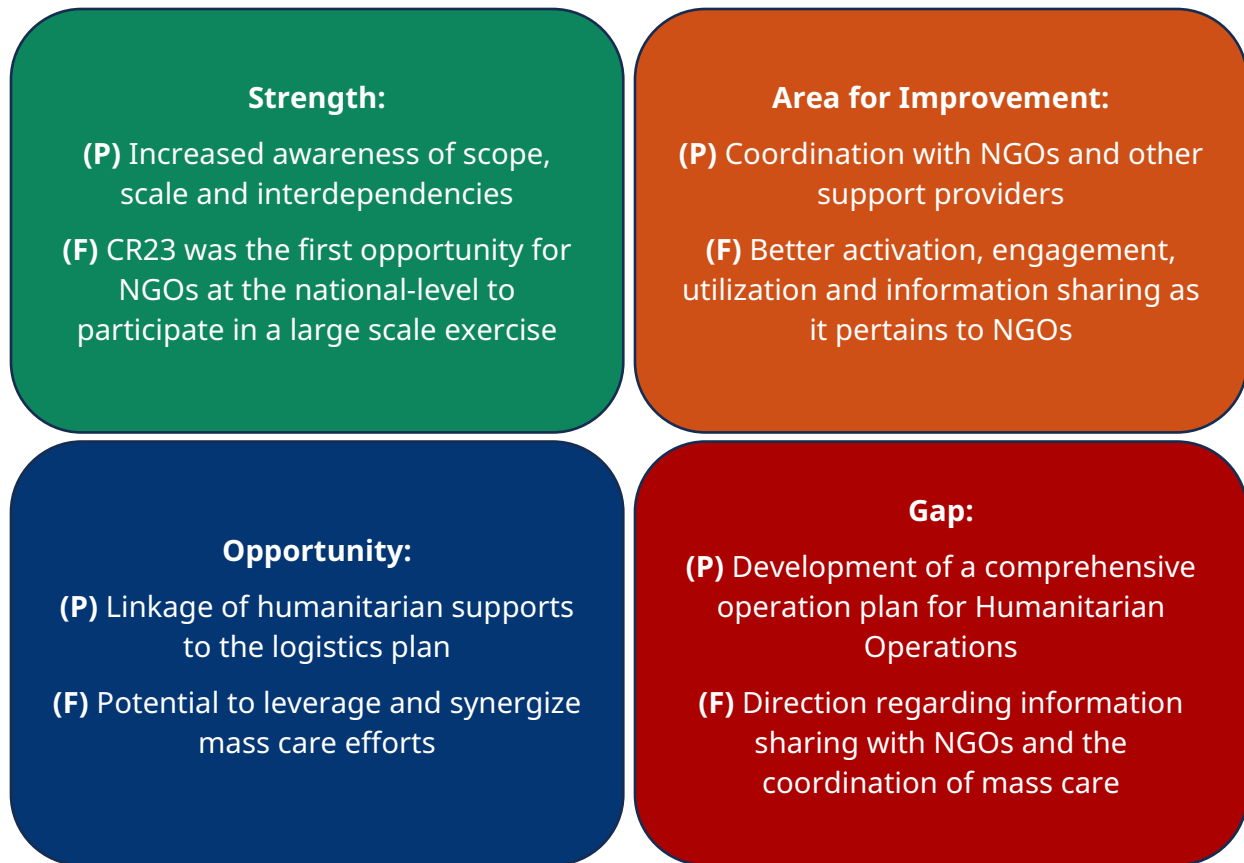
- (P) Enhance joint messaging between the federal and provincial information officers.
- (F) Tools that can simulate social media interactions exist and could be leveraged for future exercises to further increase realism. This would allow public communications to better simulate an emergency event and increase realism.

## Mass Care

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**Mass Care** – Orient plans, policies and/or capabilities for government support to provincial response activities during an event requiring Humanitarian Assistance / Mass Care.

### Summary



Legend: P= Provincial and F= Federal

### Strengths

- (P) Exercise participants increased their awareness of the scope, scale, and interdependencies of Mass Care related tasks.
- (F) During hotwashes, representatives of all participating NGOs noted the importance of the learning opportunity, highlighting how useful participation in CR23 was for organizational learning and training.

## Gaps

- (P) There is no comprehensive operational plan particular to the unique problem set of hundreds of thousands of displaced people following a catastrophic earthquake.
- (F) Direction regarding information sharing with NGOs and the coordination of mass care, especially as it pertains to cascading effects or the sudden escalation of medical support in an emergency scenario. The lack of a federal Mass Care plan was also identified as a gap.

## Areas for Improvement

- (P) Coordination with NGOs and other support providers. Healthcare was out of scope for this exercise; however, consideration for future development. Need to build awareness around internationally accepted standards and practices for the delivery of humanitarian assistance in austere conditions.
- (F) Better activation, engagement, and utilization of NGOs in emergency response. Further involvement and integration of these organizations would bolster capacity for mass care. At times during CR23, NGOs felt underused and uninformed of what the conditions of the scenario were.

## Opportunities

- (P) Linkage of humanitarian support to the logistics plan to ensure the timely push of live-saving and sustaining resources.
- (F) There are opportunities to leverage and synergize mass care efforts. For example, emergency staff from St John's Ambulance and HUSAR teams could be put on the same flight to the impact zone.

## Conclusion

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In conclusion, Exercise Coastal Response was an excellent opportunity for federal, provincial, and other partners to practice responding to a catastrophic earthquake impacting BC. Based on feedback obtained from multiple departments, ministries, and organizations, in survey results and post-exercise hot washes, the exercise supported preparedness by providing an opportunity for participants to exercise emergency procedures, train new staff and improve existing procedures using lessons identified during the exercise. Exercise materials were praised for their level of detail, with the scenario being played at a level where live action was effectively simulated and participants highlighting the value of exercise play. Participating organizations were highly engaged in the scenario which highlighted best practices and areas of improvement from a whole-of-government and provincial perspective. Next steps include the dissemination of both provincial and federal after-action reports with EM partners. Lessons identified in these products, including this joint executive summary, are to be integrated as key elements in future exercises.

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