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Backgrounder

CANADIAN CONTRIBUTION TO RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS IN L'AQUILA, ITALY

On April 6, an earthquake of magnitude 6.3 caused the deaths of 297 people living in and around the university city of L'Aquila, Italy, 95 km northeast of Rome. Thousands of buildings were damaged, some of them beyond repair, leaving over 65, 000 people homeless. While many of the medieval city's oldest buildings fared relatively well, there was extensive damage to many of its more modern structures.

The Italian Government immediately launched a vast reconstruction project, including temporary measures to address urgent needs. The international community answered the call as well, offering assistance in the form of reconstruction projects, student assistance programs and other initiatives. More than 20 countries, including the other members of the G-8, have already offered aid alongside significant support from the private sector.

Canada is demonstrating its friendship and support for the Italian people by delivering a building that serves a concrete and useful function for the local population. The University of L'Aquila is a key driver of the region's economy and identity. Canada has therefore chosen as its reconstruction project a new youth centre near the University. The centre's facilities will include a library, computer room, gym and several multi-purpose rooms.

Financing for the construction of a community centre for youth has the backing of the local community. The Italian authorities will be responsible for the building's construction and, where possible, will employ Canadian environmentally-friendly and anti-seismic technology. Canada's \$5 million contribution will cover the costs of the building's construction. Several companies have already expressed an interest in helping assume the costs. Community associations, many of them Italian-Canadian, could follow suit.

For further information on Canadian-Italian relations, visit the website of the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade at <http://www.international.gc.ca>.