

# Community and Disaster Services

## Message from Community Services Officer



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The RAC Field Organization was established 30 years ago to assist communities by supporting local clubs or organizations.

Radio Amateurs of Canada has always been interested in local activities across the country.

Through the reports in the Community and Disaster Services and the Club Corner and Coming Events columns in TCA magazine and on the website, we are pleased to assist community groups, clubs and disaster service groups in sharing information about what is taking place in their region.

### Strengthening Resilience Through Amateur Radio

Amateur Radio and community resilience are inseparable allies in ensuring the safety of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

As the RAC Community Services Officer, I am excited to share this message reflecting our commitment to enhancing emergency preparedness within our communities.

This message underlines the vital role Amateur Radio operators play during crises and introduces our vision for the Auxiliary Communications Service (AuxComm) as we look forward to impactful milestones in our expanding national program.

### Emergency Preparedness Week: May 3 – 9

Each year, Emergency Preparedness Week (EP Week) in Canada, typically observed in early May, serves as a national reminder that preparedness is a shared responsibility. Coordinated by Public Safety Canada EP Week encourages individuals, families, organizations and communities to take proactive steps toward building resilience before a disaster strikes.

For Amateur Radio operators, EP Week transcends mere awareness. It is a rallying call to action and an opportunity for our community to showcase the irreplaceable value of radio communications when conventional infrastructure fails.

EP Week also fosters strong relationships among radio clubs, municipal emergency management offices and community organizations. Activities ranging from public demonstrations to participation in local preparedness fairs, allow our community to shine and emphasize the critical importance of preparedness.

Have you and your club reached out to your community to take part in events or made plans to introduce Amateur Radio to them?

We wholeheartedly encourage every RAC member to actively engage with their local communities during this week, reinforcing the message:

*“Preparedness matters, and Amateur Radio is a vital part of the solution.”*

Learn more at: <https://tinyurl.com/y3r46pvd>

### Amateur Radio & Emergency Preparedness: A Historic Partnership

Emergency preparedness has been fundamental to Amateur Radio since its inception. From the early days of wireless communication, Amateurs have been at the forefront, providing essential communications support when all other systems fail. This legacy not only continues today but thrives with renewed strength. Amateur Radio operators possess a unique arsenal of skills and tools essential for effective emergency management. Unlike commercial communication systems, Amateur Radio operates independently of public infrastructure.

With the ability to establish communications using battery power, solar panels or generators, Amateurs remain remarkably resilient amid power outages and infrastructure damage. From high-frequency (HF) radio that connects continents to local VHF and UHF networks, our range and versatility are unparalleled by any other volunteer communications resource.

However, it is the dedication and expertise of our operators that truly make Amateur Radio an irreplaceable asset. These individuals are not just volunteers, they are trained, certified and passionate contributors who invest countless hours honing their skills and enhancing their stations. Many hold advanced certifications and participate in regular exercises to maintain equipment ready for deployment at a moment's notice. In collaboration with modern emergency management frameworks, these operators form an organized, professional auxiliary communications service, poised to support municipalities, provinces and federal agencies. If you are one of those individuals who pride themselves on giving back, whether through church groups or community-based organizations, I encourage you to get involved.

### The Emergency Readiness and Capacity Building (ERaCB) Fund

At the heart of RAC's commitment to Auxiliary Communications Service and community emergency preparedness here in Ontario is the Emergency Readiness and Capacity Building (ERaCB) Fund. Understanding the barriers individual clubs and operators face – such as equipment costs, training materials and exercise coordination – this fund has been established to

provide targeted, meaningful financial support from the province so organizations like RAC can build and support programs within emergency management.

The ERaCB Fund backs a diverse array of capacity-building initiatives. Eligible projects may include procuring portable emergency communications equipment, developing training programs, executing emergency exercises, and integrating Auxiliary Communications Service volunteers into formal emergency management partnerships. By investing in these foundational elements, we are ensuring that Canadian communities can rely on well-equipped, well-trained and well-connected auxiliary communications when it matters most.

This fund reflects a vital philosophy: building emergency preparedness capacity requires sustained, long-term investment – not just enthusiasm. We are immensely grateful for the support that sustains this fund, and we are dedicated to directing every dollar towards tangible improvements in community readiness here in Ontario. Together, let's harness the power of Amateur Radio to enhance our emergency preparedness efforts. Your involvement and commitment can make a monumental difference in safeguarding our communities.

As in the past few years, detailed plans were submitted to the province and I am pleased to report that RAC has been approved for ERaCB funds for 2026/2027. We will continue with train individuals and exercise teams across the province. One requirement this year is a mandatory joint operational exercise with our Ontario Corp partners. This will be a welcome extension to our January exercise.

### **AuxComm Exercise: Sudbury**

In January 2026, Radio Amateurs of Canada organized a successful ACS Exercise in Sudbury, Ontario which brought together Amateurs from across the region to test their ability to establish and maintain emergency communications under simulated disaster conditions.

The event represented one of the first formal, structured deployments under the AuxComm framework and marked a significant milestone for the ACS program.

Participants practised deploying portable stations, establishing nets across multiple frequency bands, integrating communications with a simulated Emergency Operations Centre, and managing message traffic using standardized formats consistent with Incident Command System (ICS) principles. The exercise was carefully planned, professionally executed and – most importantly – it worked.

Among the key outcomes of the Sudbury exercise were a clearer understanding of local deployment challenges, the identification of equipment gaps that could be addressed through ERaCB funding, and the strengthening of relationships between ACS volunteers and local emergency management partners. Participants came away with greater confidence in their abilities and a stronger sense of shared purpose.

The event delivered exactly the kind of real-world experience and lessons learned that our program needs to grow and proved that ACS is not just a concept on paper – it is a real, operational capability that Canadian communities can rely on. For more information about the event please see the article on page 49 of the March/April 2026 TCA and read the reports in the Section News on pages 55-58 of this issue.

### **Fall 2026 Multi-Agency Exercise**

Building on the success of the Sudbury exercise in January, we are thrilled to announce that our next ACS will be held this fall and it represents a major step forward for the program. This will be our first multi-agency exercise conducted with Ontario Corp partners, marking a genuinely historic milestone in the evolution of ACS as a recognized auxiliary service within Canada's broader emergency management ecosystem.

Multi-agency exercises are considered the gold standard in emergency preparedness training. They require participating organizations to coordinate across different chains of command, communicate using interoperable systems, and resolve the inevitable friction that arises when diverse teams work together under simulated pressure.

Working with Ontario Corp partners introduces a new level of complexity and opportunity. These organizations possess deep experience in emergency operations, structured command hierarchies, and demanding performance standards. For ACS volunteers, integrating into a multi-agency exercise with such partners requires being able to meet these standards. The training and preparation that have gone into building the ACS program over the past years have been designed with exactly this kind of moment in mind.

Beyond the operational value of the exercise, the end result will include a detailed report describing lessons learned which will significantly benefit the ACS program. In addition, the multi-agency collaboration will introduce an understanding of interoperability, document procedures for integrating ACS into multi-agency operations, build relationships that will support future collaboration, and demonstrate to emergency management partners across Ontario and Canada that Amateur Radio volunteers are a serious, capable and professional auxiliary resource. We look forward to building on this foundation for many years to come.

### **Final Thoughts**

Recently, John Brunstien, VE7JBX and Doug Steventon, VE7EPT, from Vancouver, British Columbia submitted an article on an interesting topic: "Do Amateur Radio operators in Canada Actually Do Emergency Communications?" We have talked about this here in my column for years now, mainly because of the developments in Ontario. You can find the article on page 53.

This is a reminder that as we look ahead here in Ontario and across Canada BC, Yukon, Nova Scotia, and Quebec all have programs in which amateur operators have either taken part in emergency exercises or are now being sought after to assist in emergency Communications. The lessons learned during the development of the Auxiliary Communications Service lay the foundation for this program to grow nationally.

– 73, Jason Tremblay, VE3JXT

