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ENGINEERING^{*} on the Hill

REPORTING ON ISSUES ON PARLIAMENT HILL OF INTEREST TO THE ENGINEERING PROFESSION

House of Commons resumes with Speech from the Throne

On October 16, the House of Commons resumed sitting and began the second session of the 39th Parliament.

The opening of a new session of Parliament officially begins with a Speech from the Throne. The speech, given by the Governor General, is used by the Prime Minister to set out the broad goals and directions of the government and its strategies to accomplish these goals. The speech was formally passed by the House of Commons on October 24.

Normally, no public business may be conducted until the speech is passed by the members of the House of Commons. Had the government lost the vote, they would have lost the “confidence” of the House to govern, triggering the dissolution of Parliament and a general election.

Speech Highlights

The speech focussed on five main priorities:

- Strengthening Canada’s sovereignty and place in the world
- Building a stronger federation

- Providing effective economic leadership
- Continuing to tackle crime
- Improving the environment

Environment:

Environmental issues are now at the top of the government’s priority list. The throne speech outlined proposals to set concrete targets and binding regulations for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Most parliamentarians still focus on the debate over mitigation of the effects of climate change. While this is important, Engineers Canada is continuing to stress the need for the government to also address adaptation as a part of the climate change debate.

Infrastructure:

Infrastructure also received a significant mention in the speech. The government reaffirmed its 2007 Budget commitment to spend \$33 billion dollars of long-term funding over five years. It also pledged to ensure modern infrastructure

see *Speech*, p. 2

Fall Parliamentary Reception Cancelled

Engineers Canada cancelled our annual parliamentary reception planned for October 3, due to the fact that members of Parliament did not return to Parliament on September 17, as originally scheduled.

This annual reception is a well-attended event for parliamentarians and their staff. It provides engineers with the chance to communicate directly with decision-makers and help to reinforce our profession’s key issues and its importance in ensuring public safety.

The reception is also an opportunity to build upon a year of political advocacy. Volunteers of Engineers Canada’s *Bridging Government and Engineers* program are continually communicating our profession’s messages to their local members of Parliament on key

see *Reception*, p. 2

and safer roads and bridges. Additional details on the government's infrastructure plan are expected to be included in a Fall Economic Statement or the 2008 Budget.

Labour Mobility:

Also reaffirmed was the government's commitment to improve the flow of goods and services between provincial and territorial borders. The federal government and the provinces have agreed on an action plan to achieve full labour market mobility for regulated occupations by April 2009, and federal officials recognize that the engineering profession has taken a lead on this issue.

Drinking Water:

Included under the priority of improving the environment was a water strategy that was initially announced in the 2007 Budget. This strategy includes new standards to ensure that all First

Nations residents have access to safe drinking water, in addition to improvements in wastewater infrastructure, treatment facilities, sewage collection, water distribution and the cleanup of contaminated sites.

First Nations:

This throne speech also confirmed the government's commitment to improve access to job opportunities for First Nations peoples. As a part of its Aboriginal Outreach Task Force, Engineers Canada has been working to increase Aboriginal inclusion in the engineering profession.

Research & Innovation:

The speech also reaffirmed support for Canadian researchers and innovators under *Canada's Science and Technology Strategy*, announced in May 2007. This

issues such as climate change, infrastructure, immigration, mobility and water quality. These messages are reinforced during the annual reception.

Due to the cancellation, Engineers Canada is planning to engage parliamentarians through other events in addition to our other regular interactions with government.

The next Parliamentary reception will be held in October 2008.

strategy is designed to boost private sector investment in research and development and enrolment in university science and engineering programs.

Foreign Credentials:

There was no mention of foreign credentials in the throne speech. This was not unexpected, as no legislation is required with the Foreign Credentials Referral Office having been set up earlier this year.

Engineers Canada and the Engineering Parliamentarians

Parliamentarians come from a variety of backgrounds and professions. Currently, there are 11 who are also professional engineers (eight members of Parliament and three Senators). Engineers Canada works closely with this "engineering caucus" as this special group of Parliamentarians knows and understands well the issues of the engineering profession.

In April 2006, Engineers Canada held a luncheon with this caucus, and in February 2007, our Board of Directors hosted a breakfast meeting with them as well. The dialogue was very informative and constructive. On November 1, Engineers Canada will once again host a luncheon with this caucus to discuss issues of mutual importance for the new upcoming session of Parliament.

The engineering parliamentarians are:

Omar Alghabra, M.P., P.Eng.

(Mississauga-Erindale, ON)

Robert Carrier, M.P., ing.

(Alfred-Pellan, QC)

Sukh Dhaliwal, M.P., P.Eng.

(Newton-North Delta, BC)

Thierry St-Cyr, M.P., ing.

(Jeanne-Le Ber, QC)

Steven Blaney, M.P., ing.

(Lévis-Bellechasse, QC)

Hon. Raymond Chan, P.C., M.P., P.Eng.

(Richmond, BC)

Pierre Lemieux, M.P., P.Eng.

(Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, ON)

Marcel Lussier, M.P., ing. (Brossard-La Prairie, QC)

Senator Joseph Day, P.Eng.

(New Brunswick)

Senator Mac Harb, P.Eng. (Ontario)

Senator Robert Peterson, P.Eng.

(Saskatchewan)