

### Infrastructure Spending Missing Long-Term Approach

December 23, 2008 – (Ottawa) While self-interest groups and economic experts applaud Infrastructure Minister John Baird's cross-country consultations on accelerating infrastructure spending, Engineers Canada fears that a long-term approach is missing from an economic stimulus package that seems to aim only at fixing an economic crisis.

Much of Canada's infrastructure dates back to the post-war economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s and is reaching the end of its serviceable lifespan due to demands of urban expansion and changes in the environment.

In a time of economic crisis, our government should rightfully be concerned with the impact the funds may have on the economy. But it should also be concerned with ensuring long-term impact on our safety, environment and global competitive edge. Not to mention that it should examine the question of sufficient manpower to support its Building Canada Fund Program.

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the federal program could create close to 100,000 new jobs. With a nation facing a work force shortage in the area of construction, there are concerns that the municipal and provincial governments can spend the dedicated \$8 billion from the Fund effectively in the proposed time frame of seven years.

In addition, effective, strategic infrastructure renewal and new construction require time. Impact studies including environmental and economic, as well as effective asset management strategies to optimize the use of resources must be performed to ensure prosperity and safety. Rushing the process may cause decision-makers to turn to their wish list of projects in order to encourage short-term new growth, versus their to do list, that would also ensure long-term growth, safety, and quality of life.

The federal government has access to resources such as Engineers Canada and members of the National Round Table on Sustainable Infrastructure (see [www.nrti.ca](http://www.nrti.ca)), which brings together the infrastructure community, including organizations representing expert practitioners, managers and users of public infrastructure, to develop long-term framework and options for infrastructure decisions.

It is our hope that this government includes long-term strategy and asset management in their infrastructure planning.

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– 30 –

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