



ASSOCIATION OF CONSULTING
ENGINEERING COMPANIES | CANADA
ASSOCIATION DES FIRMES
DE GÉNIE-CONSEIL | CANADA

April 16, 2020

The Honourable Catherine McKenna
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
180 Kent Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 0B6

Re: Infrastructure essential to COVID-19 economic recovery

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies - Canada (ACEC), we would like to thank you for the strong, “all of government” approach in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. We recognize the immense costs that this crisis has brought to Canada’s economy and public health system.

While your government continues to respond to the most pressing public health concerns, ACEC would also like to extend its assistance and offer recommendations for future economic recovery measures to bring much-needed prosperity to all Canadians.

We anticipate that infrastructure will be a cornerstone of effective economic stimulus. Infrastructure investments will play a significant role in helping Canadians get back to work and getting our economy back on track. It will also provide important legacy improvements that make our communities more livable, safer and productive. Whether through improvements or new projects, infrastructure investments will provide a short-term economic boost with projects identified as priorities by local communities as well as a long-term return on investment by strengthening Canada’s economy and improving the quality of life of Canadians. In its 2010 report *Lessons from the Recession and Financial Crisis*, the Conference Board of Canada concluded that of all the fiscal stimulus measures, infrastructure spending has the largest impact on economic growth, noting that every dollar spent on infrastructure increased GDP by as much as \$1.20.

It will be essential to have expertise at the table as the government develops its economic recovery plan and ACEC would appreciate the opportunity to work with you to create an agile and effective infrastructure stimulus package. We are able and ready to mobilize our membership and the leadership of our industry that plan, design, manage, and deliver infrastructure projects. Similarly, it will be important to include our stakeholder partners such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Canadian Construction Association and the Canadian Council for Public Private Partnership with whom we collaborate on many issues related to infrastructure.

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We have some specific recommendations that we have shared with our stakeholder partners and that we would like to explore with you and your department:

- We strongly encourage you to direct infrastructure investments towards small and rural communities, in addition to big cities. These communities can use public investments to protect, repair and improve public assets. It is critical they receive adequate support to keep businesses open and local residents employed.
- We recommend that the federal government accelerate/re-profile some of its existing infrastructure commitments through the *Investing in Canada Plan* and other legacy programs from the later years of those programs into the next two or three years as stimulus. This would inject much-needed money into the economy in the short-term with less reliance on finding “new money” for stimulus. Furthermore, through an even distribution of investments over the entirety of the current infrastructure programs, both the owners of infrastructure and the sectors that deliver it could more effectively manage resources and long-term capacity throughout and beyond the recovery.
- The federal government can also quickly inject stimulus into the economy through the more agile *Gas Tax Fund* to jump start the recovery while provinces and territories agree to the acceleration/re-profiling of the *Investing in Canada Plan* and other federal-provincial legacy programs.
- The government should streamline and accelerate project approvals in order to get money back into the economy as quickly as possible. This will also provide owners and providers of infrastructure with the ability to respond to immediate demands, retain capacity and to effectively contribute to the recovery. This was a key lesson learned from the economic recovery following the recession of 2009. Furthermore, clear and timely decisions on projects allows for informed decision making by municipalities as well as consulting engineering firms, contractors and the entire supply chain already under financial duress through this crisis. Infrastructure Canada was very successful in implementing a streamlined approval process for these very reasons as part of the stimulus program introduced in response to the economic downturn circa 2009. The government should also allow for a single application process that would allow for the concurrent approval of multiple projects within a municipality’s asset management plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our recommendations. Our hope like yours is to ensure that investment in critical infrastructure that Canadians depend on everyday can continue to move forward and create prosperity for everyone. In that regard, our goals are well aligned with the goals of your government.

ACEC-Canada represents over 400 consulting engineering firms across Canada, ranging from large global corporations to employee-owned SMEs, that offer engineering, scientific and

other professional services and that are on the front lines of delivering critical infrastructure. By ensuring that economic stimulus is delivered through municipal infrastructure assets we can ensure a COVID-19 recovery that is sustainable and prosperous for all Canadians.

Thank you again for your “all of government” approach to the COVID-19 crisis in protecting the health and safety of Canadians while ensuring the viability of our economy. We look forward to assisting you with your next steps to bringing back a strong Canadian economy.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Gamble', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John D. Gamble, P.Eng.
President and CEO

Cc: The Honourable Bill Morneau
Minister of Finance

The Honourable Mélanie Joly
The Minister of Economic Development

The Honourable Mary Ng
The Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade