



## Introduction

On September 23, Governor General Julie Payette read the Speech from the Throne which laid out the government's agenda for the upcoming parliamentary session. Aligning with the Prime Minister's recent statements and formerly announced initiatives, the speech focused largely on the protection and restoration of the physical, societal and economic health of Canadians. ACEC and its consultant Impact Public Affairs has prepared the following high-level summary of the Throne Speech with highlights specific to the consulting engineering industry.

To view full text from the Speech from the Throne, click [here](#).

## General

In the summer of 2020, following the resignation of his Minister of Finance Bill Morneau, Prime Minister Trudeau ordered the prorogation of parliament to re-evaluate the government's plan and approach as we enter the end of the year. The Throne Speech outlines the priorities and goals of the government for the upcoming parliamentary session. Aligning with the Prime Minister's recent statements and formerly announced initiatives, the speech focused on the following areas:

1. Fighting the pandemic
2. Helping Canadians through the pandemic
3. Building a better, more resilient Canada
4. Standing up for Canadians and their values

As the official plan for COVID-19 action and recovery, there are a handful of key items the government has placed at the forefront:

- Creating one million jobs by investing in infrastructure, training skilled workers, increasing provincial trade and creating employer incentives
- Protecting vulnerable demographics such as seniors, racialized Canadians, Indigenous persons and women
- Developing a universal pharmacare program for all Canadians
- Bolstering housing and broadband development investments, returning jobs and protecting the middle class
- Large investments and goals for a net-zero sustainable future
- Commitment to establish early childhood learning and childcare programs nationwide
- National guidelines for long-term care homes

The following is an overview of the key components of the Speech that are relevant to the consulting engineering industry:

### ***Infrastructure***

- Accelerating timeline of Universal Broadband Fund to create high-speed internet for all Canadians
- Support for regional routes for airlines
- \$1B invested for homeless persons
  - Focused on eliminating chronic homelessness in Canada
- Adding to National Housing Strategy
  - Increasing investments for rapid housing in short term
  - Partnering with not-for-profits
  - Enhancements to First-Time Homebuyer Incentive
- Continued and increased investment into:
  - Public transit
  - Energy efficient retrofits
  - Clean energy
  - Rural broadband
  - Affordable housing (particularly in Indigenous and northern communities)

### ***Economic Recovery***

- Expansion of Canada Emergency Business Account to help businesses with fixed costs
- Improving Business Credit Availability Program
- Further support for hardest-hit industries
  - Travel/tourism, hospitality, the arts
- Short term
  - Maintaining low interest rate as long as necessary
  - Build a sustainable stimulus and recovery plan for future economy
- Long term
  - Investments into middle class
  - Taxing “extreme wealth inequality”
    - Limiting stock option deduction for wealthy persons, corporations
    - Addressing corporate tax avoidance by “digital giants”
      - Mandating their revenue is shared with media and digital creators
      - Requiring they invest into creation, production and distribution of Canadian media content
- COVID-19 Economic Response Plan arriving in fall to provide fiscal outlook

### ***Jobs and Workforce***

- Government seeks to create one million jobs to restore employment to former levels
  - Investment in social sector and infrastructure
  - Training to create more skilled workers
  - Incentives for employers to hire and retain workers
  - CEWS extended through summer 2021
  - Providing more paid youth experiences in 2021
  - Eliminating barriers between provinces to encourage domestic trade

- CERB being phased out, replaced with regular EI
  - Those who do not traditionally qualify will have a transitional Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB)
- Action Plan for Women in the Economy, guided by task force to promote women in the workforce
- Committing to a sustained investment into Canada-wide early learning and childcare system
  - Based on QC model, while working with provincial needs
- Continuing to subsidize before and after-school program costs
- Largest investment in Canadian history into training for workers
  - Supporting Canadians as they build new skills in growing sectors
  - Worker education and accreditation
  - Connecting workers with employers and jobs to grow middle class
- Investments into outdated IT systems to modernize government support for Canadians in every way
- Free, automatic tax filing for simple returns

### ***Climate Change***

- Immediate plan to be introduced to exceed 2030 climate goal, mandate net-zero emissions by 2050
- Retrofitting homes and buildings, creating jobs and cutting energy costs
- Investing in reducing impact of climate-related disasters
- Delivering more transit, and transit options
- Make Zero-Emissions Vehicles (ZEVs) more affordable
  - Investing in more charging stations nationally
- Promoting Canadian resources (e.g. Nickel and copper) needed for clean technologies
- New fund to attract investments in zero-emissions products
  - Cut corporate tax rate by 50% for companies that create jobs in clean technology sector
- Moving forward with Clean Power Fund to transition away from coal
- Supporting investments in renewable energy
- Support manufacturing, natural resources and energy sectors as they transition to a net-zero future
- Recognize farmers, foresters and ranchers as key partners in fight against climate change
- Continuing policy of putting a price on pollution
- Expanding urban parks
  - Protecting a quarter of Canada's land and oceans in next 5 years
  - Planting 2 billion trees
- Canada will ban single-use plastics next year
- Modernizing Canada's Environmental Protection Act
- New Canada Water Agency to keep water safe, clean and well-managed
  - More resilient water and irrigation infrastructure
  - Growing ocean economy alongside conservation and reconciliation initiatives

### **Concluding Remarks**

ACEC is encouraged by the prominence of infrastructure in the Speech from the Throne and the potential opportunities for consulting engineering firms in many of the proposed initiatives. ACEC will continue to work with the government to shape policy and program specifics to ensure that they are effective and efficient. In particular, ACEC will be encouraging the government to make sufficient investments in economic infrastructure alongside the significant and worthwhile investments in social infrastructure, in order to make the government's commitments economically viable and sustainable in the long-term.