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NEWS RELEASE

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Report calls for better use of science advice in policy-making

Montreal – As governments struggle to keep pace with rapid advancements in science and technology, a new report by the Institute for Research on Public Policy and the Canadian Academy of Engineering outlines how governments can better incorporate that knowledge in policy-making processes and improve the quality of government decisions.

The report is based on a series of round tables held in 2015 in six cities across Canada that brought together senior officials, engineers, scientists and stakeholders for a frank exchange on how governments could improve their use of scientific research and technological expertise in the development of public policy.

"As governments grapple with evermore complex policy problems, science and technology must play a bigger role in providing an evidence base for decisions and supporting government efforts to manage risk and uncertainty," says Pierre Lortie, president of the Canadian Academy of Engineering. "At a time when the federal government has sent a clear signal that it intends to examine these issues seriously, we hope this report will help support the new Minister of Science's efforts to achieve the goals sets out in her mandate letter. But while many of the recommendations target the federal government specifically, we strongly urge all governments to consider how the report can guide their efforts as well."

Specifically, the report calls on the federal government to:

- **Create the conditions for informed debate** by making the results of research more accessible and by being more transparent about the sources of evidence it is using to come to a decision and what criteria will be used to make the decision.
- **Strengthen its internal policy-making processes and decision-making infrastructure** by more explicitly identifying points of scientific input in the decision-making processes and by embedding that expertise at senior levels of the public service.
- **Establish a national advisory board on science and technology** chaired by the Prime Minister.
- **Encourage continued engagement between parliamentarians and scientists** and increasing parliamentarian's access to independent science advice.
- **Increase and improve the connections between government and the wider scientific community.** In particular, remove obstacles to conference attendance and include not-for-profit or industry groups in its research effort.
- Reflecting the global character of scientific research, **embed a science and technology culture throughout Global Affairs Canada.** Encourage both the public and private sectors to play important diplomatic roles in areas involving science and technology.

The report also calls on decision-makers to acknowledge that a careful balance must be struck between scientific evidence and other considerations. "Of course, evidence should weigh heavily in the balance, but it will not necessarily replace or trump budget considerations, citizens' concerns, campaign commitments and other considerations. The challenge is not to remove politics from decision-making, but rather to create an environment in which the public debate is appropriately informed by science," concludes Graham Fox, president of the Institute for Research on Public Policy.

The report, *Making Better Use of Science and Technology in Policy-Making*, can be downloaded from the Institute's website (irpp.org). Together with this release, *Policy Options* magazine is highlighting a special feature entitled "Science, Technology and Public Policy" (available at policyoptions.irpp.org).

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The Canadian Academy of Engineering is an independent, self-governing and non-profit organization established in 1987 to serve the nation in matters of engineering concern.

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