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Industrial and Technological Benefits (ITBs) Part of Solution for Canada's Innovation Demand Challenge

October 16, Halifax, NS - Canada has an innovation demand problem. For decades Canada's innovation performance has been ranked below its peers and, in some assessments, dead last. Despite the efforts to encourage Canadian business to employ innovation as a business strategy, our performance has changed very little. Business continues to perform reasonably well, in great part due to Canada's wealth in natural resources and our prosperous relationship with the United States, a dominant force in the world economy. Several forces are stressing this advantage, including: public demand for more sustainable environmental practices and the rise of Asian economies.

The rationale for Canadian business to become more innovative has been well documented. A core aspect is to sustain and build on our standard of living. The need to improve innovation performance has been a goal of policymakers for decades, however, incentives and policies to increase innovation efforts have focused on increasing innovation supply. At today's Canadian Science Policy Conference (CSPC), a plenary panel discussed procurement policies and industrial and technological benefits (ITBs). Eric Cook, RPC's Executive Director, participated in the panel.

In his remarks Cook emphasized, "ITBs are a scarce tool to stimulate innovation demand. Our efforts to improve innovation supply have been successful, as reported in Canada's science and technology performance. However, our industrial research and development performance remains poor. ITBs are one strategy to increase demand for business-led innovation."

Cook shared his personal experiences with such incentives including the industrial regional benefits that resulted from Canada's purchase of the CF-18s from McDonnell Douglas. "The CF-18 purchase brought leading edge CAD/CAM software to New Brunswick in the early 1980s. This had a substantial impact on business, many of whom adopted the technology well before it became a common business tool. This is the type of ITB that can produce lasting positive impact." Cook provided other ITB success stories and emphasized the importance of an effective procurement program.

Other members of the plenary panel included: Christyn Cianfarani, CEO of the Canadian Association of Defence and Securities Industries; retired Vice-Admiral, Jim King, now President of the Atlantic division of CFN consultants; Stephen Lund, Vice-President responsible for Industrial Regional Benefits with Irving Shipbuilding; and John Knubley, Deputy Minister of Industry Canada. The CSPC, co-chaired by John Risley and Frank McKenna, continues in Halifax through October 17.

About RPC

RPC is New Brunswick's provincial research organization (PRO), an independent contract research and development and technical services organization located in Fredericton and Moncton, NB. RPC's complement of 98 scientists, engineers and technologists are supported by a 13,000 sq. meter facility housing world-class analytical chemistry and material-testing laboratories, comprehensive life science capabilities, an internationally recognized fish health lab, extensive prototype design, manufacturing and testing services, and a wide variety of pilot facilities for the development and improvement of industrial and environmental processes and products.

RPC is accredited by various organizations including the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) and is ISO 9001:2008 certified. Further information about RPC's services is available from www.rpc.ca.

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