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ASTTBC Executive Director Leave Christchurch 3 Hours Before Quake *Commits to Renewed Efforts to Ensure Quake Preparedness*

ASTTBC Executive Director John Leech was on holidays in Christchurch New Zealand and walking the streets of the Central Business District (CBD) just ahead of the massive earthquake that hit the city a little before 1pm on February 22nd. "Jennifer and I flew from Christchurch to Sydney, Australia and upon arrival just over 3 hours later heard of the news of the earthquake. The day before we were walking in the CBD and visiting buildings which are now either fully destroyed or in very bad shape," commented John in an email from Sydney. "We connected quickly with Graeme and Lyn Wells of Christchurch, who were hosting us during our visit to NZ to make sure they were OK. Thankfully they were not affected, save for the emotional side of experiencing such an event."

John indicated he will, as a result of this experience, review ASTTBC's office earthquake preparedness to make sure the association is as prepared as possible for a similar occurrence in Metro Vancouver. "I am also reminded of the importance of appropriate building standards and of ASTTBC members' role in designing and constructing to standards which take into consideration the very likelihood of a significant earthquake in our area."

John was in NZ at the invitation of the Engineering Associates Registration Board (EARB) to discuss ASTTBC's achievements as a professional regulatory body and to advise EARB in their quest for an enhanced presence for EARB in NZ. During his visit to the NZ Capital in Wellington, John and EARB leaders met with Minister Williamson who has responsibility for the EARB Act as well as building standards. They talked about changes to building systems including efforts in BC through the new Ministry of State for Building Code Renewal to look at BC's system governing the design, construction and maintenance of buildings. There was considerable interest in the issue of the fullest possible utilization of all members of the architectural and engineering teams, including in BC members of ASTTBC. John indicated that BC and NZ may wish to connect in a formal way in order to learn from each other. More on that story at a later time.