

M. McSweeney Remarks to the Standing Senate Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources (ENEV)

Bill C12 An Act respecting transparency and accountability in Canada's efforts to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050

June 9, 2021

Senators,

Good afternoon, I'm the president of the Cement Association of Canada. Thank you for the opportunity to share a few brief remarks on the defining issue of our time – climate change.

Cement and concrete are essential strategic commodities in the modern world and will play a central role in Canadian efforts to modernize our buildings and infrastructure so that we can meet the low-carbon and climate resilience challenge. In the next 5 years Canada will produce some 55 million tonnes of cement and 400 million tonnes of concrete - that would fill enough concrete mixer trucks to circle the globe 4.5 times. Decarbonizing the cement sector needs to be a priority.

Right across the country the cement and concrete industry has unflinchingly supported strong and effective climate policy, including putting a price on pollution.

Our industry's ambition is to deliver carbon neutral concrete by 2050 and we are proud to have recently announced a formal collaboration with Minister Champagne and his team at ISED, Treasury Board, the NRC and Standards Council of Canada to work across government on a technology and policy roadmap that will make this ambition a reality.

The path way will not be easy, but there remains low-hanging fruit where implementation is impeded not by technology, but by outdated government policy, lagging codes and standards and quite frankly a lack of a sense of urgency in some corners of the public sector. We hope that the speedy adoption of Bill C-12 will help uproot this complacency and send a clear signal that Canada is serious about living up to its climate commitments. Importantly, we believe that Canada can leverage its advantages – natural resources, clean energy, and innovative spirit - to secure economic prosperity in the global transition to a clean economy.

In our industry alone, we have identified “shovel ready” projects that could avoid some 15 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, with permanent ongoing reductions of over 4-5 megatonnes per year, almost half of our industry's total annual emissions ... that's over 115 megatonnes by 2050.

We can do this by:

- replacing fossil fuels used to heat our kilns with lower carbon alternatives, like biomass, biosolids, construction and demolition waste, non-recyclable plastics, etc
- innovating lower carbon cements – such as Portland-limestone Cement and blended cements that can reduce GHGs by up to 10% at no cost to the taxpayer

- accelerating our investments transformative technologies, including carbon capture utilization and sequestration – or “CCUS” technologies. These promise to reduce carbon in the manufacturing of cement, but also to sequester that carbon in concrete.

The solutions are out there.

This brings me to Bill C-12. We don't deny this government's ambition on climate. I believe that climate change is a priority for all parties, even if there are disagreements on the most effective path. However, we must all acknowledge that tackling climate change is:

- not just an economic challenge
- it's not even just a technological challenge
- it's effectively a cultural challenge

It requires new ways of:

- thinking
- of doing business, and
- new innovation in the development and delivery of public policy and services.

This level of system change is hard, and it won't happen organically, without strong and transparent accountability mechanisms.

Bill C-12 may not perfect – and we encourage this committee to consider how it might be strengthened – including how it can secure more accountability from our provinces, territories and municipalities.

But if Bill C12 can help promulgate the required sense of urgency, if it can uproot complacency and bureaucratic inertia, and if it can signal to the business and investment community a sense of confidence, stability and predictability needed to attract capital investments in a clean economy in Canada ... maybe we have a chance, for the first time in our history, of finally meeting our climate change targets.

I urge you to pass Bill C-12 before the end of this session.

Thank you.