

**Media Release****March 20, 2013**

*Attached is the text of a speech delivered by Michael McSweeney, President and CEO of the Cement Association of Canada, at the 2013 Environmental Defence Gala held on March 20, 2013. In his remarks, Mr. McSweeney advocates for a collective approach to address sustainability challenges, speaks to the industry's commitment and significant investments to reduce its environmental footprint and shares lessons learned thus far on the path to greater sustainability.*

**ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENCE GALA  
MARCH 20, 2013, THE EGLINTON GRAND, TORONTO**

**MICHAEL MCSWEENEY  
CEMENT ASSOCIATION OF CANADA PRESIDENT AND CEO  
REMARKS**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Thank you, Sarah. Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening.

It is an honour for me to be standing before you this evening on behalf of the Cement Association of Canada, and our members across the country, as the Presenting sponsor of tonight's gala.

It is also a pleasure to be sharing the stage with Erin Brokovich, a woman whose commitment to empowering people and helping them find their voice is a story that has been woven into our cultural fabric in North America.

Of course, I would be remiss not to acknowledge Rick Smith who has been such a force behind Environmental Defence and the position it holds as one of Canada's most effective ENGOs. Rick has also been instrumental in the creation of the Cornerstone Standards Council, a collaborative effort between industry and the environmental community to develop world leading practices for aggregate extraction, and has led Environmental Defence's contribution to other issues that are important to our industry, including the protection of the Great Lakes. Rick, thank you for your dedication and hard work and I wish you all the best in your new role leading the Broadbent Institute.

Some of you will no doubt have noticed that the Cement Association of Canada is increasing its presence at several of these events – the Pollution Probe Gala, the WWF Panda Ball, Pembina’s unGala, and Lake Ontario WaterKeepers to name a few. And you may be asking yourselves “why?”. Why would an industry association, probably relatively unknown to many in this audience, want visibility with the environmental community?

I’d like to answer that question by tying it to tonight’s theme of renewal. In fact, as you look at the small gift we left for you at your place setting, you will notice our “invitation” to “rediscover” concrete. Behind that message is our own story of renewal. “Rediscover concrete” is about learning to think about, communicate and apply sustainability in new ways in our industry. It’s an invitation to learn more about a material that plays an essential role in everyone’s lives and it is the beginning of a new journey for us as we re-examine, rediscover and renew our own vision of sustainability for cement and concrete.

Although the terms are often used interchangeably, cement is actually an ingredient of concrete. Cement is the “glue” that binds sand, gravel and water together to make concrete. And so we are inviting you to “rediscover concrete” because concrete is the visible end-product of the cement value chain and the product you see in roads, bridges, buildings and all manner of infrastructure in our communities.

In fact, concrete has been around for thousands of years. There are still examples of ancient uses of concrete standing today. In modern societies, concrete is a virtually ubiquitous material. Globally, about 3 tons of concrete per year is produced for every man, woman and child on this earth. Only water is used in greater volume. Concrete is also perishable and very much a local product, typically travelling less than 150 km to a project site. We like to think of concrete as an essential ingredient in a 100 mile infrastructure diet. There is a concrete facility (or several) very near where you live.

Yet, very few of us have spent even a few minutes contemplating concrete and its role in our lives. Michael Buesing, a New York based architect, recently blogged “Concrete is a critical component of our built environment – the architectural equivalent of the air we breathe. We need it, and it’s always there, so we don’t give it much thought.”

We need to think more about concrete, precisely because it is so ubiquitous. How do we measure the economic, social and environmental value of a substance so essential to modern economies and modern living? What role will concrete play in building a sustainable future? What issues must the cement and concrete industry address and what solutions can it provide to broader sustainability challenges?

These are questions our industry has been asking ourselves for many years. We know that they are difficult questions with no easy answers but our social license to operate depends on our ability to respond.

For decades, our industry has invested tens of millions of dollars per year to become more efficient, cleaner, more transparent and increasingly focused on product-based solutions to sustainability challenges. We're proud of the progress we've made. A modern cement plant is

significantly cleaner, 20% more energy efficient and produces 20% less GHGs than technology widely used only a couple of decades ago. We are much more active in the communities in which we operate. We are heavily invested in research, and alternative energy projects that promise to lead the next wave of environmental progress in our industry. And there is a raft of innovations - pervious pavement, ultra-high performance concrete, carbon sequestering concrete blocks, air purifying concrete panels - which we are very excited about. Much of these developments are unknown even to those in the industry, which is why we claim that concrete is "even smarter than you think". Still, we know we have a long way to go.

Throughout this journey, we've learned many lessons and we're still learning. One of the most important lessons is that sustainability is a collective challenge – one larger than any one sector – that demands collective solutions. It's a journey that will fail if taken alone. And so our invitation to "rediscover concrete" is not just about getting you to think more about our industry, it's an invitation to work with us on this shared challenge. We're ready to be proactive partners.

Another lesson is that sustainability is as much about socio-economic values and relationships as it is about the laws of nature. Solving sustainability challenges demands more than good science, more than rigorous data and analysis; it also demands humility and adaptability in the face of ever evolving knowledge and ideals.

I attended a conference recently where an architect quoted American philosopher Eric Hoffer and it really struck me as an eloquent expression of the true challenge underlying our quest to build a sustainable future. He said, "In times of change, learners inherit the Earth and the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

I am here today because we are ready to be learners. And because I know Environmental Defence and many of you are ready to be learners too.

As a start, I invite you to visit [RediscoverConcrete.ca](http://RediscoverConcrete.ca), our new portal on concrete's contribution to sustainability that will be launched next month. There you will find a wealth of information on the sustainability of our industry, including links to the work that some of our members are engaged in with Environmental Defence on the Cornerstone Standards Council.

We believe that concrete will play an important role in building a sustainable future. In fact, we're excited about where sustainability will take our society and our industry. With renewed energy and vigour, I hope you will work with us as we endeavour to understand and shape what our common sustainable future looks like.

Thank you very much for your attention.