

# Why is the cement and concrete industry taking a leadership position on net-zero and sustainability?



In the face of increasing impacts from climate change, governments and the public are focused on reducing carbon emissions. Cement manufacturing alone contributes 7%<sup>1</sup> of global emissions, with the construction of buildings and infrastructure responsible for some 42%<sup>2</sup>. Cement, concrete and other building materials are targeted for regulatory and other interventions that collectively threaten our competitiveness, even as they offer opportunities for our sector to grow and thrive from decarbonization investments.

## What have we done?

For decades, the cement and concrete industry has improved its value to society, augmenting the quality of our products by focusing on long-term durability, using high-quality local construction materials, and investing in sustainability.

Recently, we have brought this leadership into the spotlight with the development of a [first of its kind net-zero partnership with the federal government](#) as well as the release of [Concrete Zero: Canada's cement and concrete action plan to net-zero](#), an industry-leading action plan that offers an ambitious, transparent, and data-driven assessment for how our industry will help Canada achieve its net-zero carbon goals while continuing to benefit from concrete as a versatile, durable, cost-effective, resilient and essential construction material.

## Why are we doing it?

Concrete Zero is a call to action to our government and construction sector partners to work with us to support opportunities and remove barriers to securing and improving the value of concrete and concrete products in a changing environment and economy.

This directly enables us to address three challenges:



### 1. If we don't define what net-zero and sustainability means to our sector, others will define it for us.

Some governments, environmental and economic think tanks, and third-party technology companies are attempting to prescribe their vision and solutions for cement and concrete production. These efforts range from prescriptive regulatory interventions, prescriptive procurement policies and specifications, poorly considered support for unproven or marginal technologies, and efforts to promote other materials at the expense of a balanced approach to material performance considerations. While the market is increasingly looking for net-zero solutions, it lacks the detailed product knowledge needed to specify concrete under a performance specification model.

<sup>1</sup> [Global Cement and Concrete Association](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Architecture 2030](#)

Our leadership puts us in a better position to shape these interventions to focus on performance rather than prescription, as we have successfully done, for example, with the Federal Government's [Standard on Embodied Carbon in Construction](#), or our efforts to help municipalities move toward adoption of the federal standard, as we did in Langford, British Columbia.

This also provides us an opportunity to ensure that resilience is an equal part of the sustainability conversation. For example, Building Forward: Alberta's 20-Year Strategic Capital Plan, states as a guiding principle that:

*“Capital assets in Alberta will need to be constructed to withstand decades of use, change, and exposure to weather extremes. Integrating resiliency and sustainability into all public capital assets will help build future-focused infrastructure and guard against risks presented by floods and wildfires. This will deliver better value for Alberta taxpayers and lead to better social, economic, and environmental outcomes through conservation of sustainable materials, lower emissions, more efficient energy use and reduced water needs.”*

This type of performance based language is critical for jurisdictions across Canada to adopt.



## **2. There is no one-size-fits-all solution – leadership means preserving business flexibility and focusing on performance to maintain competitiveness and attract investment.**

The cement and concrete industry's net-zero Action Plan offers solutions that enhance the flexibility of each cement and concrete producer to meet changing market and regulatory demands in a manner that makes sense for their own operations, preserving competitiveness, profitability, and independence of investment choices. Our leadership also positions us well to attract policy and investment support through various government programs, whether they are for capital projects or additional workforce training.

For cement producers, sustainability leadership is also about attracting private investment to modernize our facilities and secure a strong supply of Canadian cement into the future.



## **3. In competition with other materials, we are stronger together.**

Competing materials, particularly wood, have mobilized an army of “boots on the ground” to market their solutions with minimal supporting information to validate their claims. They are leveraging the opportunities presented by today's housing shortage and affordability challenges to strengthen their message and value proposition. Concrete Zero is counteracting this – our Action Plan provides the platform to align and amplify our message and showcase our critical role in providing durable, resilient, safe and sustainable solutions for buildings and infrastructure, now and in the future. For example, the ready-mixed concrete industry across Canada came together to develop a [guideline for specifiers, decision makers, and others to support the adoption of low carbon concrete](#). This is just one example of the work the concrete and cement industry is taking on to make it easier for our stakeholders to join us in our carbon reduction efforts.

## **About the Concrete Council of Canada**

*The Concrete Council of Canada, comprised of the Canadian Concrete Pipe & Precast Association, Canadian Precast/Prestressed Concrete Institute, Canadian Concrete Masonry Producers Association, Cement Association of Canada, Canadian Ready Mix Concrete Association, and the Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute, is the foremost authority on cement, concrete, precast concrete, and masonry in Canada.*