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Concrete Ontario – 2022 Budget Submission
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs
January 2022

Concrete Ontario is the voice and resource of the ready mixed concrete industries across Ontario. Representing over 96% of all concrete production and manufacturing, Concrete Ontario brings education, technologies, research and innovation to architects, designers, contractors and concrete companies.

Across Ontario, there are 285 ready mixed concrete plants located in virtually every constituency. Cement and concrete are vital participants in Ontario's economy, contributing to 54,000 direct and indirect jobs across the province and generating over $25 billion in direct, indirect and induced economic activity. Construction is widely viewed as the most reliable and quickest way to drive economic recovery both in the medium and long term.

Committed and Predictable Three-to-Five Year Infrastructure Investment Spend

Cement and concrete are produced locally and create local jobs and support local families in every community across the province. Last year we asked the government to continue to invest in infrastructure projects to get construction back in operation and employees back to work.

We were pleased to see the government accelerate projects in the 2020/21 season and commit to an infrastructure investment of $145 billion over ten years. The acceleration of projects last year helped to spur construction activity, getting people back to work and jumpstarting the economy.

This year we are building on that request and are asking the government **to commit to a predictable three-to-five-year infrastructure investment spend**. A committed and guaranteed plan provides certainty for business and allows us the opportunity to accurately forecast and plan accordingly, contributing to business success and driving the Ontario economic recovery.

With economic outlooks recently downgraded, it is important that all levels of government continue to accelerate the timelines of both funding and allocated infrastructure projects. This investment must also be spread across the province, recognizing the growth of smaller communities over the past two years and the infrastructure needs that accompany that growth.

Labour Force

Many people are leaving the trades due to retirement, health or other reasons, resulting in a decrease in the number of construction positions since March 2020. To meet the building needs of our communities, we must look at opportunities to increase the number of skilled workers.

With many Ontarian's losing their jobs during the course of the pandemic, we believe that this opens up opportunities for consideration of non-traditional careers that are in need of attracting individuals to the industry. The shortage of truck drivers in Ontario continues to be a major challenge for our industry. Finding and retaining qualified drivers has never been more crucial. These good paying jobs are necessary to support the infrastructure development that drives the economy.

Insurance Coverage

At the same time, we would also like to highlight the concerning issue of insurance coverage. The industry is increasingly finding it more and more difficult to get new and young drivers insured. Insurance premiums have seen a drastic increase over the past several years. While initially increasing annually by 15 to 20 per cent, we have recently seen increases as high as 50 to 100 per cent. While this includes both new and young drivers, the increases are also being applied to drivers who are experienced and have clean driving records. With an ageing workforce and an opportunity to retrain workers who have lost their jobs during the pandemic, competitive and affordable insurance rates need to be accessible to small businesses. Without competitive rates, or insurance companies that will insure younger drivers, the industry will soon face an even greater shortage of qualified drivers. This has been an ongoing issue over the past few years, and we have been unable to resolve this with either the insurance industry or gain the attention of the government.

In closing, Concrete Ontario and our industry partners are here to work with all parties in the Ontario legislature to assist with the economic recovery of the province. We are committed to working with you and our municipal and federal partners to stimulate local economies, and we look forward to contributing to plans to bring Ontario back to economic prosperity.