

Equiterre and SERA Launch Province-Wide Investigation into Aggregate Certification in Quebec

Montreal, Wednesday, December 7, 2011 – Socially and Environmentally Responsible Aggregate Canada (SERA-Canada) is pleased to announce a new collaboration with Equiterre that will investigate the degree of interest amongst stakeholders in Quebec in establishing a world-class voluntary certification system that sets a high but achievable bar for its aggregate sector.

SERA-Canada was established in June of 2011 as a not-for-profit organization with a mission to promote the responsible sourcing of aggregates and other construction materials across Canada. To date, SERA-Canada has been focusing its efforts in Ontario where it is working with a balanced group of stakeholders to develop voluntary certification standards for socially and environmentally responsible aggregate extraction in that province.

“The SERA-Canada Founding Board is very proud to take this next step towards a Canada-wide certification system,” says Michael Fenn, Interim Chair, SERA-Canada Founding Board. “By undertaking this study we expect to get a clearer understanding of how the challenges facing the aggregate industry in Quebec are perceived by stakeholders and their receptiveness to a market-based mechanism that sets voluntary standards for excellence in environmental and social responsibility. This will inform our work as we pursue world-class aggregate certification across Canada.”

Today’s announcement comes as Equiterre, Quebec’s leading sustainability non-governmental organization, begins a provincial scan to assess the degree of stakeholder support for developing similar voluntary certification standards.

Equiterre’s 15 year commitment to sustainable solutions for individuals, organizations and governments makes it a natural partner for this project, as does its background in green building practices. Its experience with the Centre for Sustainable Development taught it about the extensive use of aggregates in the construction industry.

The scan, which will be conducted over the next 2 months, will solicit municipal, aggregate industry, environmental NGO, community groups and First Nations input regarding current and future challenges in the aggregate sector and the suitability of voluntary certification standards to help overcome them.

“Third-party certification may offer Quebec’s aggregate sector the tools it needs to create concrete solutions to social and environmental concerns. That is what we are exploring now,” explains Sidney Ribaux, cofounder and executive director of Equiterre.

While aggregates are recognized as an essential material to meet the growing demand for infrastructure renewal across Canada, public concerns over social and environmental impacts has been increasing.

Geography and development patterns across southern Canada are combining to pose significant challenges including the fact that:

- High value sand, gravel and stone are often comingled with other significant ‘remaining’ fragmented natural features such as remnant woodlands and located in areas of rich, important biodiversity;

- It is anticipated that millions more people will move to urban centres in the coming decades, exacerbating conflicts between infrastructure needs and land use.

The end results are aggregate planning and approval processes in many provinces that are becoming increasingly lengthy, expensive and contentious; creating uncertainty for the industry, community and other stakeholders. Often there are no winners under these circumstances.

Both the Forest Stewardship Council and the Marine Stewardship Council have proven effective tools in Canada and abroad for encouraging resource management that is more environmentally friendly and responsive to the needs, interests and aspirations of local communities. Socially and Environmentally Responsible Aggregate Canada (SERA Canada) will build on this positive trend examining how a similar approach may be applied to Quebec's aggregate sector.

ABOUT EQUITERRE

Equiterre helps build a social movement by encouraging individuals, organizations and governments to make ecological and equitable choices, in a spirit of solidarity. We see the everyday choices we all make – food, transportation, housing, gardening, shopping – as an opportunity to change the world, one step at a time.

About SERA (www.seracanada.ca)

Socially and Environmentally Responsible Aggregate (SERA) is a not-for-profit organization that will create, administer and promote widespread support for certification of responsibly sourced construction materials. Its initial focus is on establishing a voluntary certification system to promote responsibly sourced aggregate materials in Ontario, offering operators an innovative way to demonstrate their efforts to recognize the social and environmental expectations of local communities.

For further information:

Émilie Vallières, Equiterre

Tel: 514-605-2000

Email: evallieres@equiterre.org

Nicholas Schulz, Director of Communications and Outreach

Tel: 647-883-2719

Email: nschulz@sera.ca

Web: www.seracanada.ca