



Legislative Assembly of Alberta
3rd Floor, 9820 -107 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta
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February 15, 2019

Attention: Mr. Aaron Roth, Committee Clerk

Re: Bill 211, Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act

We are pleased and appreciate the opportunity to provide this submission to the Committee in support of Bill 211.

The Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance (ORCGA) promotes efficient and effective damage prevention for Ontario's vital underground infrastructure. The ORCGA unites all the industry stakeholders through our over 500 members working towards a common goal of safe digging practices. Ensuring that all excavators obtain locates and practice safe digging methods will provide a safer community.

The Province of Ontario passed Bill 8, "The Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act" in 2012 and was the first legislation of its' kind in Canada. The passing of this legislation and its' implementation reduced the number of phone calls that homeowners and excavators needed to call from up to 13 down to a single number in order to proceed to dig safely once the locates were received.

The impacts of third-party damages to underground infrastructure can be disastrous. Direct impacts can result in utility outages causing minor disruptions, major system outages to large numbers of individuals or businesses, or in the worst case, injury or loss of human life. In addition, a ripple effect of indirect impacts such as traffic congestion, business disruptions, evacuations, tying up emergency services and others can be significant.

Currently, over 800 organizations, including municipalities, gas/oil transmission and distribution companies, electric transmission and distribution companies, telecommunication companies, and others, are mandated under Bill 8 to be members of Ontario One Call.

The end result is simple. The easier it is for homeowners and excavators to call for locates, the more likely safe digging practices will be executed. By reducing the number of calls required to obtain locates from up to 13 as mentioned above, down to a single number at Alberta One Call, this will certainly simplify the process. This trend was apparent in Ontario after the full implementation of Bill 8, with approximately a 20% reduction in underground infrastructure damages.

It is, however, important to note that effective damage prevention is a shared responsibility and is an ongoing effort. Legislation such as Bill 8 in Ontario, or Bill 211 in Alberta is essential and a big step towards reduction in buried infrastructure damages and improved public and worker safety; but it doesn't end there.

Ensuring the homeowners and excavators are aware that they must call and actually do call before they dig is an ongoing effort by all stakeholders. Similarly, excavators must strive and continue to exercise safe digging practices once they have received their locates to avoid underground infrastructure strikes. These two factors had the effect of slightly increasing the number of underground infrastructure strikes, after the initial decrease realized after Bill 8 implementation. Not calling Ontario One Call prior to excavating and insufficient or unsafe excavating practices were the top 2 root causes to underground infrastructure damages in the years following legislation. The passing of Bill 211 is a vital step towards improving public and worker safety when excavating around underground infrastructure.

The ORCGA fully supports the adoption of the Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act, Bill 221, and appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Douglas F. Lapp, P. Eng.
President & CEO
Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance

