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One Call bill gets hearing in Ontario Legislature

TORONTO

A single, mandatory one-call locate program for underground utilities will enhance worker and public safety and improve the province's productivity, Union Gas representatives told a legislative hearing on [Bill 8, the proposed Ontario One Call Act](#), at Queen's Park recently.

Currently, an excavator may need to call up to 13 different numbers to locate all utility lines near a dig site. If passed, Bill 8 would establish a non-profit, industry-funded mandatory "One Call" call centre as the single point of contact for all underground utility location services in Ontario.

"Ontario One Call handled more than 700,000 locate requests in 2011 and sent out almost 2.7 million locate orders," Mike Shannon, Union Gas' vice-president of distribution operations, told the hearing.

"That's a staggering number. However, we are not there yet. To take this system to the next level we need all utility asset owners to participate. We know that making Bill 8 law will go a long way toward making Ontario as safe as the U.S., where all 50 states already have mandated One Call centres, and have seen damages reduced by as much as 70 per cent."

Sarnia-Lambton Conservative MPP Bob Bailey re-introduced Bill 8, a Private Member's Bill, to the legislature last year. It was co-sponsored by Paul Miller, NDP MPP for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. Union Gas is among a broad coalition of presenters who will appear before the committee, which also includes the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**, The Aecon Group, Enbridge Gas Distribution, Bell and TransCanada.

As a founding member of Ontario One Call and the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance, Union Gas has long advocated for a single mandatory locate system for the province, and works to raise awareness about the importance of locating underground utility lines before beginning a digging project, even for something as routine as planting a tree.

In 2011 alone, there were almost 2,700 natural gas line breaks in Ontario.