

# DAILY COMMERCIAL NEWS

## AND CONSTRUCTION RECORD

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Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association supports underground location bill

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Proposed legislation that requires underground asset owners to join the Ontario One Call network will improve site and public safety and project efficiency, say supporters of Bill 180.

“Right now in Ontario, when working in some of the larger municipalities, you have to make between 12 to 14 phone calls to get your underground locates done,” said Joe Accardi, executive director of the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association (OSWCA).

“Then you have to manage those 12 or 14 phone calls to ensure the locates show up. It really puts a strain on your project schedule.”

Bob Bailey, Sarnia-Lambton MPP, presented Bill 180 that would require all owners of underground assets to join the not-for-profit Ontario One Call network which provides excavators and homeowners a central contact point for underground locate information in a given area. Bill 180 was introduced for second reading at Queen’s Park on April 21.

Currently, utility stakeholders such as Bell, Enbridge, Hydro One, Toronto Hydro and Union Gas are already volunteer members of the Ontario One Call Network.

There are also approximately 30 municipalities on the network. OSWCA members have found a significant difference in project schedule efficiency on sites where the one call network is used.

“Having a one-call system where they manage the underground locates for you helps reduce the time to get the locates done and most importantly, ensures you do not miss any of the locates,” added Accardi.

“If I call one call, they know exactly what has to be located in that area and send out the appropriate people.”

From January 2008 to April 2009 there were over 2,500 pipeline strikes and under the current multiple call method, for 60,000 housing starts, approximately 300,000 phone calls are required before excavation begins.

The resulting strikes pass on “unnecessary costs” to customers and taxpayers of almost \$33 million annually.

“Having a mandatory one call system — whereby there is one simple number that can be used to obtain the location of all underground utility lines before digging — will reduce costs to taxpayers, is business-friendly, streamlines processes and, most importantly, will save lives,” said Jim Douglas, President of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance (ORCGA).

The ORCGA is made up of 17 stakeholder groups consisting of over 100 organizations, and represents the broadest consensus on damage-prevention practices in Ontario.

Bill 180 legislation has also been a priority for the Ontario Road Builders’ Association and the **Residential and Civil Construction Alliance of Ontario**.

A 2008 ORCGA report on underground utility strike damage reported by its stakeholders from 2005 to 2008 found that no locates being done attributed to almost 40 per cent of all damage noted.

“Anytime we stick a shovel into the ground there is the risk of coming into contact with potentially dangerous utility lines or gas pipelines,” Bailey in a statement.