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Sarnia-Lambton



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Hamilton East – Stoney Creek

*Legislative Assembly of Ontario*

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## **ONTARIO ONE CALL SYSTEM BILL RECEIVES ROYAL ASSENT, OFFICIALLY BECOMES LAW**

**QUEEN'S PARK** – Bill 8 – *The Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012*, introduced by Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey (PC) and Hamilton East – Stoney Creek MPP Paul Miller (NDP), was signed into law today when His Honour David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, signed the document giving Royal Assent, completing the final step in becoming provincial law. Bill 8, establishes a not-for-profit, single point-of-contact call system for all underground infrastructure location services in Ontario.

Bill 8, passed by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on June 14th becomes one of only seven pieces of legislation that has successfully been passed through the minority parliament elected last October.

"I am very pleased that this bill has passed," said MPP Bailey about his first successful piece of legislation. "This new law isn't just about streamlining a confusing system to make it easier to dig in your backyard; it's about preventing accidents and saving lives. But also, this law will cut red tape, allow shovels to get into the ground quicker and put job creating plans into action faster."

"To have been one of the MPPs who brought greater worker and community safety to all parts of Ontario, fulfills one of my goals in being elected to Provincial Parliament," said Miller. "Not only that, but showing how we can work across party lines to do this is something of which I will always be very proud. It's an unparalleled experience to watch the Lieutenant-Governor sign Royal Assent to this much needed piece of legislation," said Miller.

The new industry-led one call system ensures that homeowners, surveyors, and contractors alike can trust that all underground utilities at the location of a dig will be marked; thus, eliminating the need for the many time consuming calls that currently must be made to utility owners and operators. The burden of co-ordinating locates among multiple utility providers often stalls progress, consumes valuable resources, and increases project costs. These costs ultimately get passed on to consumers and taxpayers. By streamlining the locate process, a one call system will assist businesses and municipalities across the province to launch projects and get shovels in the ground sooner, bringing jobs in on time and under budget - a must in today's tough economic environment.

Yet, the economic benefits created through a one call system are just secondary to the more important increase in safety for those homeowners and labourers living and working near the location of a dig.

Public and worker safety are at serious and significant risk when utility lines such as buried natural gas pipelines, hydro lines, or sewer and water mains are struck and damaged because homeowners, contractors, landscapers and other excavators do not obtain the precise location of these utilities before they dig. In 2010 alone, there were almost 3,200 natural gas line breaks in Ontario.

“Ontario's current, voluntary approach doesn't work,” said Jim Douglas, President of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance. “Safety cannot be a voluntary exercise. We only need to look at our closest neighbour, New York State, which has a mandatory One Call system in place, to see that they have half the number of incidents that we do in Ontario. In fact, mandatory One Call systems are in place in all 50 states, reducing the risk of serious injury or fatality to workers and the general public.”

The passage of Bill 8 ensures that families can sleep more comfortably knowing that their loved ones are now much safer going to work and that an excavation in their neighbourhood is less likely to put their personal safety or property at risk.

Research by the Common Ground Alliance - a non-profit organization dedicated to damage prevention of underground facilities - has shown that when an excavator notified a locate call centre before digging, damage occurred less than 1% of the time. One call systems have been successfully implemented in all 50 states. Over a four year period, damages to underground utility infrastructure decreased by roughly 70%.

Economic analysts estimate that failing to locate all underground and overhead utilities results in unnecessary costs passed on to utility customers and municipal tax-payers totalling nearly \$39 million each year. This is in addition to the lost revenue, productivity, and efficiency for businesses of all sizes.

Regulations for Ontario's new one call system will now be set by the Ontario Ministry of Consumer Services.

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