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Sarnia-Lambton



PAUL MILLER, M.P.P.
Hamilton East – Stoney Creek

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

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FIRST BI-PARTISAN BILL, PASSES SECOND READING

MPPS BAILEY AND MILLER RECEIVE ALL PARTY SUPPORT FOR *ONTARIO ONE CALL ACT*

QUEEN'S PARK— Sarnia-Lambton MPP Bob Bailey (PC) and Hamilton East – Stoney Creek MPP Paul Miller (NDP) presented their private member's bill, Bill 8 - '*The Ontario One Call Act, 2011*' - to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for Second Reading Debate this afternoon. '*The Ontario One Call Act, 2011*', if passed, will establish Ontario One Call Ltd. as a not-for-profit, single point-of-contact for all underground utility location services in Ontario.

During the debate, Bailey and Miller received all-party support for Bill 8, successfully advancing it to the next stage of the legislative process. Originally presented to the Assembly on November 24, 2011, '*The Ontario One Call Act, 2011*' will now be sent to a Legislative committee where it will undergo an in-depth review.

"I'm very happy to have received all party support for this important bill which cuts red tape and makes safety a priority," said MPP Bailey, following the vote. "This bill 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. I hope this important piece of legislation can quickly pass committee and be called immediately for third reading."

"I am pleased to see Bill 8 come before the Legislature at this time," said MPP Miller. "With the full co-operation of all Parties, the mandatory Ontario One-Call system could begin to be in place for the up-coming spring construction season. The sooner we take action to protect worker safety and the lives of Ontarians, the better we have served our constituents."

"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."

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.

Public and worker safety are at serious and significant risk when utility lines such as buried natural gas pipelines and hydro lines are struck or damaged because homeowners, building contractors and other

excavators do not obtain the precise location of these lines before they dig. Last year alone, there were almost 3,200 natural gas line breaks in Ontario.

In 2010, a Niagara Falls landscaping company was fined \$225,000 following a fatal explosion at the site of a residential home. The company failed to locate the underground utilities and accidentally punctured a propane line on the property. The propane leached through the earth into the adjacent basement, where it eventually burst into flames, resulting in a large explosion that tragically killed the homeowner and injured two others.

At the time the Ministry of Labour found that the landscaping company had made no effort to discover the location of underground utilities or have their 'locates' marked. This oversight left the workers on site with no knowledge of what was beneath the ground where they dug and ultimately lead to the loss of life.

As such, *'The Ontario One Call Act, 2011'* has the full support of many of Ontario's construction and utility companies, as well as the current Ontario One Call Ltd. agency. In addition over 40 municipalities representing 60% of Ontario's population have already become voluntary members of Ontario One Call Ltd.

"As an excavator who relies on the prompt and thorough identification of underground utilities, I am very pleased and look forward to the passing and implementation of this proposed mandatory One Call Legislation," said Vince Bellissimo, President of Timbel Limited. "It is a long time in coming and extremely vital to the safety of our work force in the course of their everyday duties. I know that I speak for many when I say, the excavating community, and their families, are happy to see a positive political response for the common good of the public."

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