

Announcer ([00:02](#)):

You are listening to the Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Safety is always a good conversation and it's a click away. Here's your host, Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:18](#)):

Welcome to the Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Today I'm glad to have as my guests, Mr. Rob Morrison with Manitoba Hydro, who's also the current co-chair of the Manitoba Common Ground Alliance. And also Mr. Returning, actually, Mr. Joseph Rosenberg, the contact center manager at Utility Safety Partners, who also moonlights as the Damage Reporting Evaluation Committee's chair under the Canadian Common Ground Alliance. And in that regard, he assembles the Annual Dirt Report Damage Information Reporting Tool. Welcome Joe and Rob to the Safety Moment podcast. Nice to have you back. And today we're talking about the Canadian Common Ground Alliance's 2021 Dirt Report. Gentlemen, how are you today?

Joseph Rosenberg ([01:09](#)):

Fantastic.

Rob Morrison ([01:10](#)):

Yeah,

Joseph Rosenberg ([01:11](#)):

Thanks For having me

Mike Sullivan ([01:12](#)):

Sounds like you need convincing.

Rob Morrison ([01:13](#)):

Why

Mike Sullivan ([01:14](#)):

<laugh>? No, it's good to have you back and we are talking about the dirt report now. Rob, maybe you just introduce yourselves and yourself. You are the current vice-chair of the Canadian Common Ground Alliance, but you do so much more than that.

Rob Morrison ([01:30](#)):

Well, yeah, no, well I'm also the co-chair of the Manitoba Common Ground Alliance. Something that I really sort of, the more I've worked with it, the more interest, the more drive I sort of get out of this. It's so nice to be a part of both the utility and industry and administration side, but also interact with the industry as a whole, seeing their needs, how can we move forward? And then we're going to talk about the dirt report. How does that data help us drive programming to benefit all, what's reasonable from what we're pulling and how do we create it?

Mike Sullivan ([02:09](#)):

I'm really interested to go into that in a little bit more detail actually it's one of the things I wanted to talk about today, but we'll get there for sure. Joe, how about yourself? You're well known to the listeners, but let's do it again. Who are you, Joe?

Joseph Rosenberg ([02:21](#)):

Sure. I'm Joseph Roseberg, aka Joe. I am the contact centre manager for Utility Safety Partners, but I perform in a role as the chair of the National Dirt Committee or direct group, that Damage Reporting and Evaluation group that handles the curation and management of the Dirt report, which is the damage information reporting tool used by the Common Ground Alliance in the US and Canada and some other various regions to collect any kind of utility damage or sometimes near miss, sometimes aerial, sometimes submarine damage related to utilities and plant. I've been doing this at the national level for a little over two years now. I did it at the regional level for, oh God, eight years, seven years, seven or eight years, somewhere in that ballpark. I'd have to check my records for that exact amount of time. And yeah, it's always great to be here to chat about utility damages in Canada and talk about what we can be doing better and what we've discovered over the last better part of a decade, I guess

Mike Sullivan ([03:34](#)):

<laugh> in Alberta history. You don't know. Joe is affectionately known as Joe Dirt, so he's been doing this for a while and there's probably nobody better in the province of Alberta for sure. And perhaps elsewhere as well to talk about the damage information reporting tool and the data that comes out of it. Now Joe, just to begin now, this is a voluntary reporting system. I mean their reporting is not mandatory unless you're governed to do so by regulation and how does that affect in your view the data?

Joseph Rosenberg ([04:11](#)):

Well, unfortunately just means that we're always going to kind of have both a hand-picked and incomplete data set by hand picked, I mean regionally it's whomever decides to participate. We have some companies that participate nationally in various regions, so they're putting in information in Alberta and Saskatchewan and Ontario, et cetera. But there are other groups that are only putting in their data for specific regions or specific regions are finding that their data is dominated by one specific utility owner or locator group or one call service in some cases. So we've been moving towards a more complete picture over time. Just this year actually started tracking the number of submitters to each of the various regions for dirt. So we're hoping to kind of track that growth in a more high level sense in the coming years. But so far we're still having trying to top a hundred in most of the more common provinces as far as submitters go. And while we're getting close to that in certain areas like Alberta and Ontario we are struggling to even break the 30 40 threshold in other provinces.

Mike Sullivan ([05:36](#)):

What does that mean for you Rob? When we see the data and the output of that data that okay, there's so many damages per day et cetera, per province, but then we look at the dirt submitters and you know, take a province perhaps like Manitoba or Saskatchewan and there just aren't that many utility owners provide or locate providers or anybody else engaged in that whole process that are actually reporting damages. H what does that tell you?

Rob Morrison ([06:10](#)):

That's a good question. I was thinking about what Joe was saying about how do we get more people engaged. Part of it is the grassroots, it's back to the common ground alliances in each province and see

how we can create that sense of urgency And Manitoba we get a lot of participation when things aren't going well but when things are fairly even, you don't see that engagement then

Mike Sullivan ([06:38](#)):

And it's so important

Rob Morrison ([06:38](#)):

And I wish though. Yeah, well the importance, when I run data for our company from Manitoba Hydro and we look at opportunities from both the Dirt report and our internal, it's essential in how I move programming and that's any basic damage venture program, your program know what's happening out there. And one last thing, cause Joe got to say a lot at the beginning about who he is. Yeah, geez

Mike Sullivan ([07:12](#)):

He's accomplished a lot. What are you going to do? He's got to,

Rob Morrison ([07:15](#)):

Well he's Joe Dirt. But that's right. It's interesting what we're seeing here in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Alberta is that transitioning of companies in to do certain large builds. And so that national look is so important to see, so what's happening in each province and understanding the contractors that are coming in to sort of understand how to adjust your programming and that's where the dirt comes in. That gives me that little bit of a peak. How should I be adjusting, what am I missing? What's their programs? But here in Manitoba, but for me, I thrive on the data and the electric and gas side. Absolutely. And it'd be nice to have that communication aspect and that's what we're lacking here in Manitoba, I'll be honest, is that communication aspect, the communication shallow utility information that could maybe help me drive my programming more but it you'd think that would help them as well.

Mike Sullivan ([08:11](#)):

And it does, and this is where you've really moved that needle forward in Manitoba. And I mean you specifically Rob, have been able to do that. You've connected the dots, let's face it. And for so much effort and moving things forward in Manitoba for example, when the four Canadian provinces went from tail dig to Pelican Corp one call access, you were probably the first person right out of the gates to really grasp that and the online locate request process and manipulate it. So it provided data directly to the field people who are performing locates at Manitoba. So I mean let's face it. I mean had it not been for you, a lot of this in Manitoba would not have moved forward including with the Manitoba Common Ground Alliance. But there's touched on something which is really important about the Dirt report when it comes out and I read it, I go through it all cause I'm interested in this, but there, there's so much to be gleaned from that should be, when we look at the data, the root cause analysis, we should be looking at also best practices and say okay, if we managed or revise this current practice or introduced a new one or we look at public awareness programs and say if we introduce some new measures or a new effort to reduce damages in this area or when this certain thing is happening, we should see results, positive results.

([09:51](#)):

I don't know that industry is doing that. And what's your thoughts on that Rob? And I'm curious to hear what you think too, Joe.

Rob Morrison ([10:00](#)):

I think it's siloed in that sort of, I know myself, I'm driven off the numbers internally and then looking external at what Joe and the Canadian Common Ground Alliance provides. What's my next move? I do want to step back because I like what you said, we analyze it and you talked about the best practices that's about reasonableness now whatever our programs or the data tells us we should run a reasonable program to try to counter and support the industry in ensuring their safe excavations occur period. And that's why I appreciate what Joe's been able to create in the kind of Canadian Common Ground Alliance being able to create because that has allowed me to do my job better here in Manitoba.

Joseph Rosenberg ([10:47](#)):

I can't speak directly to only Manitoba's experience, but I see a lot of I've spoken both nationally and internationally about this particular topic and while a lot of the time is spent trying to convince people of what the data shows, I find a lot of best practices in the industry are still unfortunately dictated by people's gut instinct. They feel that X or Y or they're particular pet peeve is what's really driving damages or what's really going to help with the industry going forward. Or they're afraid of pivoting because they've been doing something one way for such a long time. There's a lot of momentum and inertia built up behind those initiatives. So pivoting to something that may not necessarily be their idea is always very difficult. So we get a lot of emotional decision making when it comes to best practices rather than people actually just following the data. And that's been an unfortunate byproduct of a lot of my time working with the direct groups has been just trying to counter the narrative of, well we've been moving this way. And to quote Dr. Phil, how's that working for you? Because they're still seeing damages at similar rates time over time again.

Mike Sullivan ([12:13](#)):

That's what we're seeing, right? I mean in 2021 there are 11,400 damages reported and voluntarily reported to the Dirt. Still 45 roughly damages a day. When you look at that as an average, that really hasn't changed all that much. That 45 damages a day anyway. It doesn't seem to have changed that much and those damages, if we look at the data, it's still relatively the same. The one area that I think has gone down, if I'm not mistaken is the damages as a result of no locate request. That has actually gone down and that's a good thing. So we're seeing more of that now. Again, still voluntary reporting, but if the damage reporting numbers are essentially staying the same in terms of volume and we're seeing a reduction of damages where there was no locate, that's a good sign. That means that people are getting the message, people are going they requesting a locate before they dig, which is excellent. And so that message is going out but overall we're not seeing a reduction. So is it just that damages are shifting from, well they used to be caused by this but now they're caused by that or we're making strides in one area and maybe neglecting something else or is it something new that's happening that I'm just not seeing

Rob Morrison ([13:37](#)):

Infrastructure builds the amount of massive projects going out there and I can only speak to Manitoba, but I know it's gone through other projects like that. Fiber to the home, that's huge and I think we're right now in the cusp, this country of that instant communication and that install's happening now and that's cross. I know in Manitoba that's where we're seeing our damages. Just it, it's an abnormal construction period. We've had over the last two years probably anticipating another three years, there's a lot of excavation happening and that I feel and as well as the ground's congested

Mike Sullivan ([14:18](#)):

And largely though that infrastructure is being installed where it is congested

Rob Morrison ([14:23](#)):

Exactly where they all have to share that area and that's what here in Manitoba at least that's what we're seeing. And I like that you touched on it. Yeah, click before you dig really gone Manitoba, we had over 76 or 76,000 excavation requests. So projects happening in the province last year. We take that and we look back just six seven there, that's a 25% increase in notification. So that's huge. And I like that you touched on it, that's a success because we can't fix everything at once. And that's why what Joe provides and individual provinces and utilities provide is you look at that high number of what can I pull down to try and get us back in. And every time you do that you have something else popping up the other side. So it's about trying to manage that. And I know for me here in Manitoba is that relationship with industry. I love that we show this to everyone because they're now a part of that conversation. It's just not utility. Looking at this and saying what are we going to do to gosh darn contractors. This allows everyone the opportunity to sort of see what's happening out there and how can I be a part of this and get this down to me is the big picture for that dirt report.

Mike Sullivan ([15:50](#)):

Another tip of the hat to Manitoba Joe has been part of this conversation for a couple of years now ([16:00](#)):

Where the locate requests method online or by phone has proven that locate requests made online reduced damages and a tip of the hat to Manitoba. That province is very high percentage on locate requests online from members and contractors but that percentage is very high and we're seeing that in Alberta. Saskatchewan still has a ways to go, but that's not by accident. There's a lot of work has gone on there to get that moving forward. So damages are down and that's a good thing and I think we've really, in Alberta and Manitoba particularly, we've really reached that low hanging fruit, maybe even the midhan fruit in terms of shifting calls to clicks and now it's the homeowners, we got to move them too. But it's hard because they dig once every 10 years, maybe once in a lifetime. It's a little harder to move them but maybe more organic. But in your experience, Rob, who is damaging? Is it the contractors, is it the digging community? Sorry. Well the digging community obviously, is it ourselves, is it the utility owners damaging their own utilities or is it homeowners

Rob Morrison ([17:15](#)):

The utility owners? I don't see a lot of it. Yes it does occur, it's infrequent but there's lots of processes and the opportunity to have those processes in place to ensure that excavation is safe. I'm proud of the contractors to be honest here in Manitoba we run some unique programming here, safety watch certification we do a lot of field audits now we get right into their meetings and they're engaging us. They want that support. So I'm really proud of them for sure. And I think it's gone down in percentage, it's panned out or gone down, but again, the excavation amounts have increased, so rate per it's dropped for them and I'm super and that's something that we don't capture as well. You know may get the same 50 damages but when you're the request of increase by 20%, that's a good drop and that's a success

Mike Sullivan ([18:11](#)):

Damages per locate request or notification are down. Yeah,

Rob Morrison ([18:14](#)):

Like the homeowners right now, and you're right, they dig every 10 years. How do we touch them with our excavation expectations and recognize this 20 years ago, feel free to go dig in your backyard. Nowadays things have changed and one big thing I've tried to push is if you look at a clearance sheet that you received from a utility owner and it doesn't quite make sense at the point I believe that professional excavators, we used to call 'em professional excavators, but now I think they truly are professional excavators because they understand the whole process, they understand the mapping, the requirements, the safety aspects. It's right now, yes, it's the homeowners that we're sort of seeing that issue with or it hasn't really dropped with them.

Mike Sullivan ([19:08](#)):

Mark your calendar for March 28th and 29th at the Cambridge Hotel in Red Deer. Utility Safety Partners is having its 2023 utility safety conference. We have a great lineup of presenters and breakout sessions and we also have as a special guest, Mr. Jeff McWhinnie, the keeper of the Grey Cup and the Grey Cup itself. In attendance you'll be able to get your picture taken with the Grey Cup. Looking forward to seeing you at the Utility Safety Conference March 28th and 29 at the Cambridge Hotel in Red Deer. Go to our website, utility.safety.ca to register.

([19:47](#)):

Joy, I want to talk to you about the number of dirt submitters for province and this is going to be a little bit of self-indulgence here. Hailing from Alberta and being part of Utility Safety Partners Alberta One call for the last many years, I was constantly being asked when the dirt report came out, Mike, why are there so many damages in Alberta? I thought we were doing things really well and I would always say, well we are doing things well but how come we have so many damages per notification? A thousand notifications we're always one of the highest. And it bothered me because to the great unwashed or somebody casually looking at the data, that is true now this year and I knew I would tell people, well we have the second. Yeah I think it was the second highest number of dirt submitters and that, well I don't know what that means but sure the damages are still high. But now we have this new table in the dirt report that goes into a little bit more detail. Maybe you can tell us a little bit about that.

Joseph Rosenberg ([21:00](#)):

Yeah, effectively or so. Effectively coming back to what we were talking about a little bit earlier there, there's a lot of myriad factors that factor into exactly how big of a deal are these utility damages and how accurate is the dirt data itself. So as you mentioned, registered Dirt submitters by province has some, there's 79 in Ontario, 71 in Alberta and then there's a steep drop off as you go to the other provinces. British Columbia has 20, Quebec has eight, Atlantic Canada has five, Saskatchewan has six. And there obviously needs to be a lot of work done everywhere to up those numbers. We're not going to get a true picture of what's actually going on in each province until we have, well ideally the majority of utility owners at minimum submitting damage reports to kind of give us an idea of what's actually happening I know we're here specifically to talk about the Canadian report, but one of the things I find as good kind of bellweather is looking at some of the US reports where they do have legislation for dirt registration and dirt reporting and hearkening back to what I was mentioning before where there's a lot of best practice policy that's driven from the gut rather than the data.

([22:22](#)):

I think there, there's some US states where it's kind of obvious where they keep following the same process and they're not really pushing towards, say as you mentioned, web requests, which as noted

have a lower incidence of utility strike and their damage reports generally maintain at least relative to their number of construction starts per year and their damages are maintained because they're not really doing, they're, the narrative that they're pushing isn't really affecting the number of utility strikes. Now it's harder to say here what exactly is going on in Alberta. We do see the numbers going up or staying relatively static despite construction fluctuations. We saw a construction drop in a couple years ago, but we saw the dirt excavate or damage numbers actually go up. This was of course due to onboarding new registered submitters. So we had more submitters starting to supply us information, but the number of actual construction starts in the province had actually gone down.

(23:35):

We do table all of those as well. I do recommend taking a look at the various subsections for each province the regional profiles as we call them because they too talk about, just to give some context to the numbers they talk about housing starts how many people are currently employed in construction for that given year? The construction GDP in millions of dollars. And those kind of give a good idea of what exactly is happening in the province that you're, it kind of ebbs and flows with the economy. There's some lagging indicators for projects that were currently underway when the economy say went down or were currently spinning up when the economy went up. I wish we actually had better data 15 years ago. Cause I think it would be really interesting to look at how that kind of scaled across the 2008 to 2013 boom time and see how those numbers scaled up with utility strikes. Because I was with U S P or formerly Alberta one call during those eras and I do remember there was a pretty significant uptick in strikes during those years because he had a lot of flyby nights and a lot of smaller companies spinning up and things like that and safety was not prioritized.

(24:53):

Yeah. When it came to a lot of these subcontractors

Mike Sullivan (24:56):

We hadn't evolved like we have today.

Joseph Rosenberg (24:58):

Yeah, and I'd go so far as to say that during more of a needier point in economic terms, you're going to see less utility strikes relative to the construction G D P because you're dealing with more experienced companies and the more experienced guys or who are being kept on. So ultimately you're going to see less strikes from that group.

Rob Morrison (25:22):

Well and equipment improvements too when you bring in water AirVac excavation processes right there that that's huge too. And it'd be nice to, like you said, if we had that data from 10 years ago, 15 years ago when those pieces of equipment brought in to now and make that, I can't say it as nicely as Joe, he was very smooth, the very white sort of damage prevent reporting here but to have that relation of increased excavations, changing equipment type and so forth and just sort of see Mike, we talked about how damages are maintained or going up, I don't believe that, not what the amount that's happening out there. And I could take it back to the contractors. They're willing to invest in their programs.

Mike Sullivan (26:10):

Right. And you think, you said technology, I mean new construction practices, these are all reducing damages but there's just more excavation than there ever was. Before we go, I wanted to talk a little bit

about what is in your view, what do we need to do next? And I think I know the answer and I, I'm not going to try and preclude it here, but when I look at table 10 of the Dirt report and that's the report that says has a summary by province or region and we look at the number of per thousand notifications and Alberta's the highest 2.37 damages per thousand notifications and Ontario is the lowest at 0.72. Now when I look at those two provinces, they're comparable in terms of the number of damages they will not even not locate requests, but number of damages and number of dirt submitters. So that's important to look at as well. What do you think, and I'm going to ask you first Joe what do you think is the most important thing we have to do in Canada and by province to make the most significant impact to reduce damages?

Joseph Rosenberg ([27:27](#)):

Well it just so happens that that is at least a major part of my contribution to the report isn't just the organizing of the data, which is the real time consuming bit, but the actual conclusion and potential action of that. So of course number one is what we've been hammering for years and what I hammer when people let me talk for a long time and blather on and it's not always something that people want to hear, but that is the push of people to a web, web-based service where self-service in particular where the customer or the excavator is putting in their information themselves, processing their request and virtually white lining their proposed excavation area. This eliminates a massive hurdle in the locate process because fundamentally when you're talking to somebody on the phone or you're talking to somebody because some places do it through chat and you're trying to relay that information, there is an opportunity for both.

([28:26](#)):

Not only just misunderstanding but a fundamental the degree of clarity is just always going to be a lot lower particularly when it comes to that virtual light lining process. I mean somebody can copy down your words verbatim bright roads. The best customer service agents will always be able to do that without issue. But when it comes down to explaining a map verbally and then having it transposed onto a two-dimensional map, though it is very difficult and somebody that's been in the industry now for, oh god, it's 16 years I've seen so many maps done improperly because there's so many things that can go wrong. You may not know the land very well. The way it looks from a satellite view is going to be totally different from how it looks on the ground.

([29:19](#)):

You might not get your EastWest north south correct because you just got turned around or you're slightly off center from where those things are. You may express your distances in meters when you mean yards or vice versa or feet when you mean meters there. There's just so many different things that can go wrong. So when having the customers put in those virtual white lines online prior to excavation, guaranteeing that their work area is correctly articulated to the members and the locators and hopefully subsequently located correctly based on that is number one. And we have seen the conclusive reduction based on the mathematics and the analysis that we've done. That is the case. Secondly, call the one call center. I mean <laugh>, no notification of one call center is the number one identifiable known root cause for utility damages. This is across both Canada and the us. When there's no notification made at all and there's no utility locate done, damages are more likely to occur. This is pretty standard stuff. It shouldn't even need to be said.

Mike Sullivan ([30:35](#)):

And I think the data I remember seeing is when there is a locate request, damages are reduced 99% of the time and when there is no locate request, then the damages increase dramatically. But if you make a locate request, the likelihood of damage is less than 1%.

Joseph Rosenberg ([30:55](#)):

Correct. And kind of thirdly, kind of harkening back to what I mentioned before. We have seen, for lack of a better description, some recession times more due to covid and the world's response to that and things where things kind of trended down in 2020 and 2021. But we saw a major shift in root causes. We saw the damages as a result of excavation issues. So that's excavators making an error, snagging a line working outside of the locate zone not properly flagging, things like that. Those all actually reduced two by a notable amount in 2021 over 2020. This again may be due in part to less experienced excavators in the field and more of the experienced guys being retained during when companies were paring down. Or it could be due to better education or better training in the field, et cetera. Or just more experience, better equipment. As Rob mentioned, we see more and more adoption of hydrovac and things like that as time goes on. But conversely, we saw locating issues jump by a full 55% in 2021 over 2020 as an identifiable root cause. Now I won't even begin to speculate on that because that's not my wheelhouse. We have training standards for that.

([32:25](#)):

But I guess the third thing would be locator training, standardize it, get a singular system across Canada, across North America where locators are kept to a standard and Lord this may get me in trouble, but make them certified professionals.

Mike Sullivan ([32:46](#)):

Yeah, it's been a long standing objective.

Joseph Rosenberg ([32:48](#)):

They have people's lives in their hands, man, they should be. It's been a

Mike Sullivan ([32:54](#)):

Long standing objective of Kaul and others. There's definite need for that. How about you Rob? What's your view on what can we do and to reduce damages when we look at that summary, I mean it's always roughly the same.

Rob Morrison ([33:09](#)):

Well first off up the safe excavation is that notification process always said it and it's about good communication back and forth. So what we've done with click before you dig is I incredible with transferring that information. The first start is make sure that information going back to the customer is that is reflects what they want and simplify the communication. You know, send me a map, I'm sending 'em back, identifying what I agree with and make sure it's landmarked, make sure it's clear. That's number one. You sort of said it there, Joe 15, 20 years ago when I was in the field longer, we don't have as much in the ground. It's congested and there's conflicts in the ground now and there's multiple. So how do we get around that? And I'm, I'm not going to go as far as Joe because I, I'm still employed and I have to make sure I watch but

Mike Sullivan ([34:11](#)):

Joe too,

Rob Morrison ([34:12](#)):

We need to Yeah, well we should have that

Mike Sullivan ([34:17](#)):

As

Rob Morrison ([34:18](#)):

Far as I know anyway, this podcast,

Mike Sullivan ([34:19](#)):

As far as I know, he is employed anyway,

Rob Morrison ([34:22](#)):

But I do think that utilities need to re-look at that certification aspect and I think we need to regroup because it's not so much of pulling someone in, training 'em and sending 'em on their way. And Joe's absolutely right taking a delays in projects, bad locates impacts industry's business, but it can also cause an issue with the public. And you're right, it's dangerous. We have dangerous plant underground that we need to address and locate accurately here in Manitoba. One thing I did was we track damages. Directional boring, there's so much directional boring happening right now. Are trenchless excavation that there's something that had to do there and why did we attract attack that? It's because it was considered a high risk if an incident occurred. Track gas especially where it can migrate, get into homes. So we adjust our programming there. But with that programming, and you touched on it, Mike, is about education.

([35:23](#)):

The contractors don't want to mess up. I know that they're looking for reasonable direction to help support what they need to get done and not to get in conflict with us with what their installs are. Our next step is about how do we educate and communicate and what maybe step outside of our box and be more engaged with them in their programs instead of saying this is our guidelines, build it yourself where I'm saying this is our guidelines and let me help you identify how to build it into your programming to help support your business to make sure there is no conflicts. That's where I see the next step, but yes, absolutely and like I say, I will concur with what you said Jill, the locate aspect. Yeah. We need to start looking at that as a more serious skill and yeah, should be moved to that next level. I agree totally.

Mike Sullivan ([36:17](#)):

So one of the things I was looking for, and neither of you mentioned it was legislation. The critical element that you both talked about is making sure people submit a locate request and in order to, that's great, but what if all the utilities aren't registered? Then you have another issue. If we have legislation that mandates registration of all bird utilities with the notification center and equally mandates a locate request before every ground disturbance, now you're really covering both sides of that equation. When I look at the data we have here in that, again that table 10 Ontario's the only province with comprehensive damage prevention legislation and as a result I think they have very high number of locate requests and they have a very low number of damages per thousand notifications and also

considerably high relative a number of dirt submitters 79. And I think they could be higher double that given the number.

Joseph Rosenberg ([37:23](#)):

I was going to say not too comprehensive if they don't have all their companies required to be reporting into Dirt

Mike Sullivan ([37:29](#)):

<laugh> and that's not part of the legislation unfortunately. And I would prefer that's part of the legislation that they have to submit damages to dirt. But you know do see that number of damages per thousand, south thousand notifications is quite low. And we've been working on this for so long pushing that rope up a hill for legislation and we're not pausing but we are looking at the reality of the situation is that we have an election coming here in Alberta, so we have to manage with the ebb and flow of government and that's where we are right now. But I'm hopeful that in five years I'm going to put it out there in five years we'll see more provinces going down the legislation path and the values there. There. From a best practices standpoint, I agree with you, we need to have the call before you dig is great, but we need to manage that where the vernacular is and move it to click.

([38:28](#)):

We know that online locate requests reduce damages full stop. That to me is equivalent to, hey look at that. There's a best practice here because it reduces damages. That's what we do. And yet it's still not a best practice in the CCGs harmonized best practices. I can't understand that. I don't get it. The data's there in Alberta, we've gone through it a couple of times, Ontario's gone through it it reduces damages, it needs to be at best practices. And this is a failure in my view on the CCGA and on the members that are not recognizing and making this change, articulating this change as a best practice. We're doing so many more things reduce damages than why not that. So there's certainly a lot we can do.

Rob Morrison ([39:16](#)):

It's frustrating. You're absolutely right Mike. It's frustrating because we hear the same story over and over and over where you are. There's a risk when we start legislating of course. Oh yeah. Because now it's oversight and what are you doing? But the same argument sort of flows where well why am I phoning this guy and or clicking in everyone else or who's a part of clicking. It's pretty simple. And what you've guys have done with that program or we have done in western Canada with that program, it's pretty incredible.

Mike Sullivan ([39:56](#)):

It is, yeah.

Rob Morrison ([39:57](#)):

And so I think we have a good product that again, it should be pushed. There should be a no-brainer. There should be, like you said, low-hanging fruit to get it implemented. This is

Mike Sullivan ([40:09](#)):

Part of it, right? This is part of the low-hanging, this is it. We've done all the heavy lifting. Yeah. And I say, I mean collectively there's thousands of people across the prairie provinces in BC

Rob Morrison ([40:19](#)):

And I don't know why industry's not pushing it and I'll be honest with because I'm getting their argument, their concerns, why do I have to phone this guy? Or they weren't a part of this. How do I know that utility's there? Well you're right. If we knew and there's that requirement, maybe I'll throw out there, why is the RMs when they're allowing for an excavation to occur or it's show to be installed that they're not dictating, hey,

Mike Sullivan ([40:43](#)):

As a condition,

Rob Morrison ([40:44](#)):

You'd have to join the one call center at that

Mike Sullivan ([40:46](#)):

Time as a condition. You must do this

Rob Morrison ([40:48](#)):

As a condition and there's no cost, there's no impact on the RM at all. It's just please put it in your condition. And that's best for everyone, including them.

Mike Sullivan ([40:59](#)):

I think we're stopping municipalities is they, so many of them realize they have no idea where their buried plant is and then they'll be faced with so many notifications that they have to triage or locate. The cost would be just so high, but we

Rob Morrison ([41:15](#)):

Have to start somewhere. And it's not saying to them, you joint click. All I'm saying is any new infrastructure going within a right of way where you have to authorize, tell, just make them ask them to register, click or have it as a condition. I'm not saying start cleaning up your stuff. I'm saying let's start somewhere.

Joseph Rosenberg ([41:35](#)):

Nope. And that makes tons of sense. While there may be plant from the fifties, sixties that's only outlined on a blueprint, that's rat chewed and moldering in a dungeon somewhere. <laugh> new stuff.

Mike Sullivan ([41:49](#)):

You paint quite a picture there. But holy tune off far.

Rob Morrison ([41:51](#)):

Where are you getting your information from, Joe?

Joseph Rosenberg ([41:54](#)):

I mean I've talked to public works and they've told me this just the same. They say like, well we don't know where half of it is because it was all put down 70 years ago and Steve, Bob kept it in his basement and had a draw. He died finally.

Mike Sullivan ([42:08](#)):

Yeah,

Joseph Rosenberg ([42:10](#)):

His widow donated it to the town library. Now it's sitting in a crypt there. Man,

Mike Sullivan ([42:16](#)):

That's probably not far from the truth in some cases, right? I mean, but it's

Rob Morrison ([42:19](#)):

Not about shaming them. We don't want to shame 'em. We're just saying let's start now.

Mike Sullivan ([42:23](#)):

Yep. Oh yeah, I agree. Let's

Rob Morrison ([42:25](#)):

Build for the future.

Mike Sullivan ([42:25](#)):

We're moving this conversation to a different area and that's okay and I'm going to have to bring it to a closer that's tune.

Rob Morrison ([42:30](#)):

But that's Joe. Part of the

Mike Sullivan ([42:31](#)):

Legislation we're proposing is giving municipalities a five year grace period to register their data because we know it's a big challenge and it's a big expense, but as you said Rob, you have to start somewhere. And until we do those things that are going to be hard then we're not going to see. I don't think we're going to see a lot of changes to the number of damages that are being reported every year and to the number of damages on average every day. I just don't see it. And when I see that those numbers, those brute numbers not going down, my biggest fear, my biggest fear is we are one damage away, a catastrophic event from all of a sudden having legislation Dr. Drafted and written and implemented for us. And if that happens, we're going to be in trouble because when we draft legislation amongst our peers and subject matter experts and we take the time to do it and engage people and draft it and circulate it for comment, and we still hold onto that pretty tight before we hand it over to government because once we give it to government, we don't know what we're getting back.

([43:41](#)):

But we've done our due diligence in the other situation where a catastrophic event dictates what happens next. We're probably not going to be engaged that much. And I've seen it before at a federal

level, when the N E B was producing its damage prevention regulations, they asked for a lot of comment over many years, but they didn't really listen to it until I think it was the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association finally put the hammer down, said, listen, you have to listen to what we're saying. And it took that much and this is what my big worry is. I've seen it happen before. It will happen again if we don't get ahead of it.

Rob Morrison ([44:23](#)):

Well, and it's about also understanding legislation in this case should not be used as a threat. And constantly I, I've seen it where industry will say, you know what? If we'll go to the government and we'll, well if you use it as a threat, you don't get to buy.

Mike Sullivan ([44:39](#)):

No. You can't use it as a threat. It's got

Rob Morrison ([44:41](#)):

To be it. This is a pretty impartial opportunity

Mike Sullivan ([44:44](#)):

Collaborative to

Rob Morrison ([44:45](#)):

Just collaborative to make sure, hey, we're all on the same page.

Mike Sullivan ([44:48](#)):

Non-partisan too, right?

Rob Morrison ([44:50](#)):

Perfect. Exactly. Yep, yep. And it may save us from that incident. You say it's down the road

Mike Sullivan ([44:58](#)):

Probably. Well it's these calm waters. They concern me because I think we get to a level of complacency that is phantom and you said it yourself, Rob Joe, there are more excavations happening than ever before. That tells me that, okay, damages as a root cause where there's no low key requests have gone down, but it just takes one and that then all, we all look like we've failed and we're working hard. We're pushing that rope up a hill. Sometimes that rope seems to be attached to a boulder. We're pushing that up the hill too. But we need to get there and I'm really glad we have people like you that we continue to work with both of you and a number of people just like yourselves across the country that contribute to the dirt report. And if you haven't read the dirt report, if you haven't looked, you can find on the CCGAs website canadian.cga.com.

([45:59](#)):

It's right there on the splash page in their homepage. You can download the report, you can read it, you can provide feedback to the CC g through info@canadiancga.com. I believe the email is, but you may have to look for that to confirm. But this is where it's important. If you're not registered for as a dirt submitter in your province, please do so if you're contributing to the cause. It's an anonymous reporting

function. We won't know who you are. We don't care who you are. We just want the data. Gentlemen, thanks so much for joining us today and always a pleasure. I'm sure we'll have you back again and I think next year you become chair of the C C G, is that not correct prom y?

Rob Morrison ([46:42](#)):

Sure. Absolutely. No. Why? It's been a great opportunity working with that group and across, it's been five years ago, I would not see myself being a part of such a great organization where, what is a constant battle? Well, it's a good battle. We're all volunteering and it's an amazing battle when we get these little wins and we start moving that needle. And it's something that I think we all are very proud of. It's a good group. I agree. Like-minded people that are just looking out what is the best opp opportunities out there and let's make it work.

Mike Sullivan ([47:19](#)):

Well, thanks very much guys. Have a great rest of your week and we'll chat again too.

([47:26](#)):

That's going to wrap things up on the podcast. I to thank our producers Stories and Strategies and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any directory you're listening on. And please do leave a rating. We really appreciate that. You can follow us on Twitter at Utility underscore Safety and we're also on Instagram and Facebook. If you'd like to send us a note to maybe you have an episode idea, please email us@infoutilitysafety.ca and put podcast in the subject header. I'm Mike Sullivan, president of Utility Safety Partners. Click to know what's above and below. And remember, one click costs you nothing. Not clicking could cost you everything.