

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 ([00:15](#)):

Hey Everybody. Thanks for joining me on the Safety Moment podcast. My guests today are Mr. Ron Laidman with Enertia Solutions and Mr. Iain Stables with ATCO Gas ATCO Pipelines. We are talking about the alternate locate provider program that launched in Alberta one week ago today after a very long development process. This is a game changer for the damage prevention process in Alberta, and likely you can draw a line in the sand when the alternate locate provider came into the fold. So without further ado, let's get going. Ron, welcome back to the podcast.

Ron Laidman ([00:56](#)):

Thanks. Nice to be here, Iain, always a pleasure. We hardly ever talk. Iain, it's nice to see you again.

Iain Stables ([01:03](#)):

Yeah, it's good that I catch up, Mike. Always a pleasure and looking forward to this. So thank you. So

Mike Sullivan ([01:09](#)):

Here we are now. This is after one week of the final unveiling of the alternate locate provider. But let's look back at how we got here. And this is at least two and a half years ago. And Iain, I'm looking at you here, is what really pushed this in Alberta?

Iain Stables ([01:33](#)):

Well, I think there was a couple of things, Mike. We started working on this two and a half years ago, but the consortium had been piloting the ALP since 2019. And I think through the pilots that we did and a lot of the feedback from the contractors, we realized that there was a need for this and a desire from the excavation community to provide an option. And really that's where it came from, is we wanted to be able to provide an option to the excavators that would allow them to get their locates done safely in an alternate manner and enable them to better control the timeline and the services they're getting. So while there was a number of factors, it really was started grassroots from requests from the excavation community.

Mike Sullivan ([02:21](#)):

Could we go back even further though? And what I want to maybe talk about is the consortium. There was a time many, many, many years ago when every utility located their assets. So you would have as many as six or seven different locators arriving to locate their individual assets. What created the consortium? And it came out of that obviously.

Iain Stables ([02:45](#)):

Well, I think what created the consortium, I

Mike Sullivan ([02:47](#)):

Guess what is the consortium too, right?

Iain Stables ([02:50](#)):

So we'll start with what created the consortium. I think what created the consortium was people recognized the inefficiency of having seven, 10 different individual locators come out to do in essence one locate on multiple facilities. So the consortium was formed and it started in the two major cities, Edmonton and Calgary. And the consortium is the, I'll say the large utility owners in those areas, the ATCOs, the Telus, the ENMAX' EPCOR's came together to make locates more efficient and that's where the consortium came from and that's how the consortium started. And like you said, that was the last real big change in the locate world was the consortium forming and there's been really little change since then.

Mike Sullivan ([03:42](#)):

How long ago did that happen? When the consortium came together? Oh,

Iain Stables ([03:44](#)):

You're asking me to H myself? That was prior. Were you

Mike Sullivan ([03:47](#)):

Part of it here? Were you part of ATCO at the time?

Iain Stables ([03:49](#)):

No, I was locating prior to coming to ATCO as a consortium locator. So that even predated my time going back now 25 years. So I think the consortium's probably been around for about in some form about 30 plus years. Yeah,

Mike Sullivan ([04:06](#)):

So I mean this is nothing new. The consortium has been around a long time, but now you fast forward and I think what also happened, yes, it was more efficient. There's no question about it. You have one locator showing up to identify, locate and mark those utilities, which are the most common on every ticket. But after a while, and I don't know how long we're talking about, it also created, inadvertently created an artificial bottleneck because now you've awarded contracts to do those locates, but in order to remain profitable, the contractors, they can only assign a certain number of locators to each city and the demand maintains or increases, and now you've got a bottleneck where locate delays are happening because the contracts are, they have to be maintained to remain profitable. How long has that reality, I guess, of that inadvertent bottleneck been realized?

Iain Stables ([05:13](#)):

I think we've seen it. It goes back to my time locating in one way or the other. While the consortium is efficient in a lot of ways, our contract areas are big and we meet large companies to come in and do 'em. So we were really limited to certain vendors and didn't have an easy way to add additional locators or locator capacity when things got really busy. So I think from the get go with any gain or efficiency, there's problems that might not have been foreseen. And I think that was one of the reasons Mike for the ALP is we recognize that there's a lot of really incredible smaller locate companies in Alberta that just don't have the means or the size to be able to work for us directly. But the ALP is one way that we can add locator capacity and enable some of these incredible low-key companies out there to complete locates and add more locators to the pool in Alberta,

Mike Sullivan ([06:15](#)):

Which was really the catalyst to bring in an A LP or something, the catalyst to do something, put it that way, goes back much longer than two and a half years ago. It goes back really maybe more than a decade or two in Alberta and that we knew that there is something had to give. Now, Ron, I'm going to look at you here because you were part of the Alberta locator capacity in a sense. You worked for a locate service provider, but you're back in Ontario now, you're in Alberta for a while, you're back in Ontario now, and Ontario has a designated locator which was created also for a similar need or a very real need. But after legislation came in and some time after legislation came in, and now you've seen both in Alberta and Ontario, what do you see as the biggest difference, I guess from when you look at Ontario and how the designated locator came in?

Ron Laidman ([07:24](#)):

Yeah, and I think you touched on it there, Mike, the dedicated locator program in Ontario. It was part of legislation, so it was actually added in to the regulations themselves. So it comes at it from a different angle, whereas in Alberta, it's been created by the consortium and it's been provided in a way that's supposed to be flexible and transparent and open to adding new companies. In Ontario, it's been a little different because it's part of legislation. So you're bound by rules, you're bound by implementing certain parts of it. So each has its positives, each has its downsides.

Mike Sullivan ([07:59](#)):

No, I'm not trying to say one's better than the other. No, I think we're all trying to get to the same place, right?

Ron Laidman ([08:05](#)):

Yeah, it just comes at it from a different angle. That's really what happens here. The positive outcome in Ontario is it has led to better outcomes in terms of delivery times. It's led to better damage outcomes, just overall better turnaround and outcomes. So there's no reason that wouldn't happen here. So

Mike Sullivan ([08:27](#)):

What you're saying in Ontario, it met the objective. The objective was to reduce damages, to improve the locator capacity or expand I guess locator capacity. And it met those objectives. But as I understand it, it was very fast. It's like, here you go, this is happening. You got to make it happen. And the utilities had to do so, and we saw that that here in Alberta and two and a half years is a little bit of a long time to roll this out. But with the absence of legislation, I do think it really gave us an opportunity to own it and really work with a variety of stakeholders. So Iain, I'm going to go back to you because more than two and a half years ago, this started to be discussed, and we've been very fortunate in Alberta working with ground disturbances trainers, training program providers, and the ground disturbances 2 0 1 0 1 process was something that is something that has worked very well for a variety of utility owners and the digging community as well.

([09:37](#)):

Now, when we looked at this, the alternate locate provider, we didn't know what we were going to call it at the time, but when we looked at the A LP and I say we, and I'M utility safety partners and the consortium members and interested parties, walk me through that a little bit because we had to do a lot of naval gazing and what we looked at, we looked at different parts of the world. We looked at again, the process for GD 2 0 1. Walk me through that and what was how we got to where we are?

Iain Stables ([10:10](#)):

Oh, I mean there was a lot that went into it, Mike. I think the first thing we did was we reached out to USP because we really wanted USP to facilitate this, and that was intentional because we recognized that USP would be able to bring all the stakeholders together to really work on this and ensure that we were creating something that would benefit not just the consortium members, but the excavators, then the locators out there. And then we got in a room, and I think the first thing was we started looking at where this has been done, including the pilots we did within the consortium, and we identified what was working well and things we thought we could improve on. And it was really a group of people that were focused on, and I think you kind of said it improve locate times and reduced damages and working with all the engaged parties, we were able to come up with a framework that I think everyone felt comfortable and proud of that would enable us to start moving forward and deliver a program that will benefit the excavation community and all the ground.

([11:24](#)):

I think the one thing that we've always maintained through this is now that we've gone live, we're not done. We knew that from the get go that this is going to be continually living and changing as we get feedback. But it really did just start with people that came into a room, put differences aside and said, we got a common goal and how do we do that? And I think the one thing that we really benefited off was the groundwork that was laid by SP and the former A-B-C-G-A with the ground disturbance, level two, seeing how the excavation community has really adopted that. That was one of the framework and something we wanted to replicate a good program, a good solid process that we were confident in. I wish it was a better magic bullet, but it really was just a lot of people in a room looking at legislation, contracts, regulatory requirements, best practices,

Mike Sullivan ([12:27](#)):

And looking around the world, right? I mean, we looked at Australia, New Zealand, Ontario, British Columbia, and other parts of the world as well. How is locating happening and going back to the ground of Disturbs 2 0 1 process for those who aren't aware for ground of disturbs training, there is a standard that was created a number of years ago, long before unification of Alberta Common Ground Alliance, Alberta One Call and the where a line program long before that. And this standard was created by a group. I can go so far back, I can't remember exactly the name of it, but that standard was created to say, okay, if you're going to be taking ground disturbance training, what do you need to know? And they brought the subject matter experts in together to create a standard that any training program or training provider that's going to deliver a ground disturbance training program, you have to cover these elements, which is the standard, and then to be certified or to be endorsed by the Alberta Common Ground Alliance at the time.

([13:31](#)):

And now by Utility Safety Partners, a training provider has to take that standard, create their training program, submit it to USP for audit, and once it has become audited and they pass audit, which is a three stage audit classroom and online included, then they can now deliver ground disturbance 2 0 1 as a endorsed training provider. Now, there are other training providers out there that deliver ground disturbance training, and that's fine, but if you are required to take a USP endorsed training program, then you need to take that program and the alternate locate provider process, if you will. The members who were involved in creating the A LP, they wanted to follow or emulate the same process. So that was a long chunk of time in that two and a half years for the subject matter experts to really decide what is going to be part of that locating and marking standard that a locating, sorry, that a training provider

would have to ensure as part of their program training program. How long did that take? I remember that vividly. It just seemed to take forever.

Iain Stables ([14:49](#)):

It did. It probably, I think that probably took out of the two and a half years we'd been working on this close to a year and a half to two. Mike. I think one of the reasons for that though is throughout the whole process, we did engage stakeholders. So there was feedback that we sought from groups and organizations, and we took that and brought that group, the working group back together and we reviewed it. And I think the thing, while we didn't maybe miss our initial deadlines, as you'll recall, Mike, we really wanted to get it right and ensure that we were as much as we could encompassing and answering some of the questions and concerns that the stakeholders got. So while it took a little longer, and I said that again, that's really why we wanted usps, we didn't do this just in silos as utility owners, we engaged a lot of stakeholders and got a lot of valuable feedback and a lot of support through the process, which did add some time. But I think now that we're here, I think that extra time was well worth it because people better understood it and could see their input and their feedback incorporated into the A LP program.

Mike Sullivan ([16:07](#)):

Now, Ron, you weren't part of the A LP yet. You're coming up on almost a year of engagement in the ALP development process. Yeah, I know it seems like much longer than it seems like a decade, but you're only coming up on a year now. When you were in Ontario and you were really working on other things related to obviously in Ontario, what were you hearing about what Alberta was doing, if anything? What were you hearing?

Ron Laidman ([16:35](#)):

Full transparency. I wasn't hearing a whole lot. So you guys were doing what you're doing, and that's honestly what I was hearing. So don't know what else to tell you. No,

Mike Sullivan ([16:53](#)):

No, no, that's fine. No, that's nothing wrong with that. It was interesting when we did finally connect and I looked at obviously what you could bring to the fold. It was extremely timely. And we had a couple of project managers that were devoted to this, and then their career paths changed. And thankfully their new employers said, you know what? You're working on something that's really important, continue doing it. And then we got to the point where we're getting closer to implementation and the audit protocol, the assessment protocol had to be developed. And you came along at just the right time, and that was extremely fortuitous, I guess you could say. But when we got to that point, the level canal, the standard had been created. We had global training and Aztec Safety, they came together to create the first locating marketing training program that was endorsed, follow the standard.

([17:54](#)):

And it was all of a sudden, so many things were happening at once. And then you came in and you began to work on the assessment protocol. We wanted to launch in April. It wasn't going to happen. We were trying our damndest and we think we knew come March it was not going to happen. But I mean, you put in a tremendous amount of work on the assessment protocol. It's not just, okay, locator, you take the training and you're good to go. That's the first thing. That's the price of entry. You got to take

training. Walk us through that assessment protocol. What is involved? If you're an alternate locate provider, wannabe, what do you have to do?

Ron Laidman ([18:34](#)):

Yeah. Well, and if you go back from the get go, we tried to set this up in a way that was going to be flexible and open to people to participate and not just limit the companies and the providers that could be part of the program. So that was the overriding mentality. Let's make sure we manage risk, manage the infrastructure properly, manage the locates properly, but make sure everybody has an opportunity if they want to participate and can participate. So that's when we go into an assessment. That's how we approach things that anyone can do this provided they have certain things in place. So we start with an initial just basic assessment and make sure that you've got the basic things on paper in place that are going to meet the requirements of the consortium to manage the risk on their infrastructure. So that's quality training, program safety, experience, resources, manpower, all sorts of things that are part of that list.

([19:29](#)):

We just do a quick check to make sure, and then we, assuming that's okay, we go into a detailed assessment from there, and we look through the documentation, we look through the supporting processes, we talk to people in the organization. We make sure that it's going to meet the level required to manage the damage and the quality and the training and the competency within the organization. And from there, assuming everything's okay, it's a matter of then getting the final approvals and final setup and contracts and records access and all sorts of things from there just to allow you to go. So it really is open to anybody who's able to demonstrate that they can manage things appropriately.

Mike Sullivan ([20:09](#)):

And by doing so, talking about both of you here, by doing so, that artificial bottleneck inadvertently created by these contracts many, many years ago is opened up, is somewhat alleviated. And so already now we're talking increasing capacity right now. I mean, I've heard high numbers, but there's some challenges of getting in the final documentation or payments in place I guess. But right now, how many potential locate service providers, individual locators are we bringing in?

Ron Laidman ([20:46](#)):

So right now we've got 13 officially approved. We've got another eight in the pipeline at the moment. And just amongst the approved ones we

Mike Sullivan ([20:55](#)):

Got, and these service writers, not just the, yeah,

Ron Laidman ([20:57](#)):

These are the companies themselves. And then amongst those companies, over a hundred locators have been registered or in process of being registered plus more to come assuming these other companies go through the process fully. So it's a huge amount if you think about it.

Mike Sullivan ([21:13](#)):

Yeah, it's a massive amount. It really is. Now a hundred new locators has the damage prevention process in Alberta, since we've had the consortium contracts in place, ever had a hundred extra locators at its disposal ever?

Iain Stables ([21:27](#)):

Never, never. No, I think that's, for myself, the exciting thing is to be able to add that capacity. And it's not just a struggle in Alberta, it's a struggle in North America. It is. So to be able to say we've added a hundred extra locators is quite an achievement and quite remarkable. Unheard of.

Mike Sullivan ([21:54](#)):

Mark. Your calendar is Monday, November 4th, 2024 through Wednesday, November 6th, 2024 at the Delta re Saskatchewan. You will see the Canadian CGA, the Canadian Common Ground Alliance's 2024 Damage Prevention Symposium attendance. Well shouldn't be optional, but it is, and I hope to see you there. We have a great lineup of presentations and presenters. It's going to be a fantastic time where you get to connect again with all of your damage prevention groupies from across the country and likely from other parts of the world as well. It's the place to be November 4th to sixth, 2024 at the Delta Regina in Regina, Saskatchewan.

([22:42](#)):

So when you think, okay, there was a bit of a delay between April 1st or April 15th, whatever it was on August 1st. Yes, there was a delay of several months, four months. But the success is there are a hundred new locators that are able to provide services across the province that is critical. And to hear you say, we've never been able to offer that ever, that can only provide good news. And going back again, and Ron having you talk about the way that assessment protocol was established, the way it was created and the way it was followed, we're not just letting any locator come in here. They have to maintain the integrity, the pedigree, if you will, of the existing contract locators that we're providing services and still providing services. And that is absolutely critical. We were not going to lower the bar. The bar was going to be maintained.

([23:42](#)):

If anything, the bar will increase over time. And the objectives is still to reduce damages, to improve the locator capacity, to improve the damage prevention process, to reduce the wait times, reduce, eliminate, locate delays. And one of the key things, and I want to underline, excuse me. One of the key things I want to underline this is it's not mandatory. Despite all of the work that's been created, despite everything that's been done over the last two and a half years, this is not mandatory. And maybe Iain, can you explain why there was a decision to not make it mandatory, to make it optional?

Iain Stables ([24:25](#)):

I think that was important for all conservative members right from the get go is we wanted to provide an option to those that wanted it. And it was designed to be just that an option because we did for people that wanted to continue to request locates and have them completed the same way they are, we're committed to doing that. And that's why we, from the get go, we designed this to be entirely optional because we recognize this is not for everyone, and we didn't want to make it for everyone. So right from the get go, we just wanted to give people an option to choose to have their locates completed in a different way if they so desired.

Mike Sullivan ([25:07](#)):

So now I'm an excavator and a member of the digging community, and I always follow the locate request process. I submit, I click before I dig and all that stuff. Now walk me through that, Iain. If I am the excavator, how do I initiate the alternate locate provider? Or how do I just continue the way things have been for 30 years?

Iain Stables ([25:28](#)):

So I wish I could take credit for this, but it was the USP staff, they designed this to be easy for people, submit and locates. There is a toggle switch, a checkbox when you're submitting a locate request that it says a LP. And if you want to use the A LP, you hit that to yes, the default is to no. So for those that don't want to do anything different, you continue to submit your locates like you currently do. But for those that want to utilize the A LP, there's just a little toggle that you hit to Yes, and that will start the process. Maybe I'll let Ron speak on the other part of it, but it really was designed to be really easy. We didn't want to build a ENC cumbersome or multi-step process. So there was a lot of thought that went into it to make it as easy as possible for people to access.

Mike Sullivan ([26:24](#)):

So Ron, what was the part you wanted to ask Ron to expand on? Well,

Iain Stables ([26:29](#)):

He's just done some good work on, because I think the second part of that is once you submit your locate request, you have to find an A LP provider to do that. I think Ron's been on some of our town halls and conversations do some good word on that. So I'll let him continue.

Mike Sullivan ([26:47](#)):

Before we go there, Ron, I'm the excavator. I've hit the toggle, I want the A LP. What happens then? What's different?

Ron Laidman ([26:56](#)):

What happens then? Is the tickets taken out of the normal process at that point? And you're allowed to then coordinate directly with a locate service provider, an approved one, and coordinate the resources and figure out the timing. And up to that point in a normal locate process, you're not dealing directly with the locate service provider. You're not setting that up, you're not communicating your timelines in that particular way. So it's just a different way to approach it. It allows you to have more control over your locate, and there is obviously a cost then that goes between the excavator and the locate service provider. That is not part of the normal ticket process, but that's why it's an alternate process and that's why it's voluntary. As we've touched on up to this point.

Mike Sullivan ([27:40](#)):

So I'm the excavator. I've selected the option, I want the A OP, and I'll be directed to the utility safety partners website where the registered endorsed or approved or whatever you want to call it, locate service providers are. And I select one from that list.

Ron Laidman ([27:57](#)):

Yes. And you can, sorry. And you select who you want, you can reach out based on the region that you're operating in. Some of 'em, they can decide if they want to do the work too. It is a voluntary

program on both sides, and that's part of the program. It's meant to be flexible and it's meant to be voluntary, and it's meant to be open to the needs of a project or an excavator

Mike Sullivan ([28:24](#)):

Looking forward, I'm going to be the type A personality digging excavator. I'm thinking, you know what? There's a great benefit here. I think I want to have a locator on staff who goes through this. And rather than just always working with another service provider, I want my own staff to be trained. Can I do that?

Ron Laidman ([28:48](#)):

Yep, definitely. Oh, sorry. We actually have a few going through the process right now. We

Mike Sullivan ([28:53](#)):

Are in violent agreements. Yes.

Ron Laidman ([28:56](#)):

Yeah, we're fighting over the time here.

Mike Sullivan ([28:59](#)):

That's right. That's right. But that's an option. I can do that. Yes. Do you think that's where this could go? I mean, now we're talking about what could happen.

Iain Stables ([29:08](#)):

Absolutely. For some contractors and type of work. I mean, a lot of excavators already have locators. They're double checking the marks. They're locating private utilities. So absolutely, it was designed with the excavators in mind from the get-go where they could meet the requirements and have staff members approved to complete the locates for the work they're going to do.

Mike Sullivan ([29:33](#)):

And I think back, I think to the current day of a contract locator, they're putting in 14 hour days during the digging season. Like anything else, there's weather delays. We just had major rain and hail in different parts of Calgary. We compressed the digging season into, if we're lucky, eight months, sometimes six. And we put a year's worth of excavation and ground disturbance and projects into that timeframe. So the locate service providers that are out there working for the consortium under those contracts, they are busy. They are very busy, and they're going from one project to the next. So the opportunity for that locator to actually have a conversation communicate effectively with the contractor, the excavating contractor is minimized. There's a smaller window to do So now, and communication is critical in any project, in anything. Now you have the ability where that locator is working for you directly and you've expanded the amount of time that you are communicating to not only understand the marks, but the locator now understands the project.

([30:52](#)):

And that is equally critical. So the likelihood of damage reduces dramatically. I remember a conversation when Australia, they created their certified locator program, training program. And to my recollection, this was created. Now, for those who aren't aware, locating and marking has always been the responsibility of the excavator in Australia, in New Zealand, I believe as well. But Australia for sure. And

they look at us and say, well, why would the utility do that? And we look at them, why would the excavator do that? But that's just been the way things are. And despite that, there were damages. And I believe it was Telstra, the telecommunications company in Australia that said, you know what? We need to have training protocol in place. We need to have some standards here that are going to be met by the locator locators, the excavator who was locating. And they introduced a certified locator process training program. When they did that. I remember this going back, the data is a little bit old, but after I think it was three years of implementation, there had been zero damages on projects where a certified locator was performing the locates. That is stellar data to look at. And I hope that we can replicate that here. And again, it's because you have that communication, you have the training, obviously you have that maintaining integrity of the process, the protocol, but now you have that ability to communicate.

[\(32:29\)](#):

You're not rushing, period. And that is I think one of the biggest benefits of this. You're introducing the locator to the project rather than having them almost be subject to it, go in and locate and go to the next project. So here we are, status quo. August 1st is a week behind us. What have you heard? Have you heard anything? It's early, very early days. What are you hearing? I know I'm hearing a few things, but I'm just curious what you guys are hearing. Iain, you're just back, so it's kind tough on you.

Iain Stables [\(33:06\)](#):

I'm back, but I have heard a lot of positives from people that they're excited about this and they see the value in it, and I think they're just figuring out how they're going to use it. So for the most part, the response and the feedback I'm getting has been overly positive and a job well done. So we'll see if that continues. But I think as people get familiar with it and start to use it, it'll continue to be looked upon positively.

Mike Sullivan [\(33:40\)](#):

These are early days. How about you, Ron? You're in touch with a lot of the locators, obviously. What are you hearing from them?

Ron Laidman [\(33:45\)](#):

And from that perspective, there's a lot of excitement and a lot of people itching to get out there. They've got clients and excavators and design firms, whoever they've been working for that want to push some of their projects through faster and they've been connecting with them. So there's a lot of activity and a lot of excitement. And we're rolling the program out. We're only a week in at this point. So there's going to be some time to get all that going. Get oh, for get people out there, get the contracts set up, things like that that need to happen. But certainly a lot of buzz out there.

Mike Sullivan [\(34:18\)](#):

I think the buzz has been positive. Something I want to talk about, and this is very challenging to talk about because I don't think we've really gone there yet enough yet, is we've seen some potential benefits to municipalities of maybe having their own employees or personnel being able to locate under the A LP. There's some mixed schools of thought there. What's your perspective on that, Iain?

Iain Stables [\(34:47\)](#):

I think that the more people we can get trained in performing locates, the better. I think where the benefit with some of these, especially the smaller municipalities, is they may not have the infrastructure

in place to respond to locate requests, but they can now do so through the A LP, right? So there's a lot of benefit with this because I think what it does is it enables people that may have not been either performing locates or providing locates to get into locates now and start either performing them for their work or providing them to the excavator, which I think again, just lines up with our mission of reducing damages and ensuring people and underground facilities are safe. So I look at this as a win-win all around, and I think we're just starting to scratch the surface.

Mike Sullivan ([35:40](#)):

Mike, I think we are on

Iain Stables ([35:41](#)):

Where this can go and what type of additional people decide to participate in it.

Mike Sullivan ([35:48](#)):

What about you, Ron? I mean, we talked about this in discussions of our own, and you've seen some of this, the benefits municipalities have seen in Ontario. Maybe you can walk me through that a little bit.

Ron Laidman ([36:02](#)):

Yeah. In Ontario, it's not unheard of for a municipality to have their own locators on staff too. So it is actually a relatively common practice, but Iain kind of touched on a lot of the benefits there. You're able to bring this in-house, you're able to cross train employees on things, offer opportunities for them. You can set up projects then with different cost structures. Other projects coming into town can be set up under an A LP project and that you've got some locates being done instead of trying to figure out how to do that and offset some of the costs that might've been associated with that and additional revenue streams, you get locators, you can then, now if a project comes through, you can set that up as a revenue stream, as an A LP program too and provide that service. So there's countless opportunities. You can go to other adjacent areas and set up programs and earn additional revenue or offset your costs differently. So there's a lot of benefit to municipalities and no reason why it couldn't expand to that degree.

Mike Sullivan ([37:02](#)):

One of the areas that this starts to touch on, this starts to cross pollinate a little bit, is we have this legislation objective that in Alberta's been there for many, many years before my time with Alberta One Call and USP. But one of the elements we have in the draft legislation is that municipalities are given five-year grace period to register their assets. And I see the A LP as providing some flexibility or latitude to get that done in some areas, whether it's one year, two years, five years, a hundred years, it's just not going to happen. And then those municipalities would be forced to register by boundary and then they're going to be over notified. And then a triage associated with that would be just as bad as having to locate everything. So we're trying to work with municipalities to introduce the flexibility that they can actually register within five years.

([38:02](#)):

And I think this, the A LP gives them that ability to do so, but those conversations are, they're not just beginning, but they haven't matured yet to the point where I think there's a good understanding of that. And that's something that I need to do for sure. But we had to get this going. We had to get this out the door, we had to get the A LP started because yes, we knew on paper this is going to work until you

actually put it into process, until you actually offer it. You don't know what you don't know. And this is why as gentlemen have said, this is going to modify, this is going to improve over time. But just again, the simple fact that the A LP is offering up to a hundred more locators to the capacity of the existing demand in Alberta is tremendous.

(38:55):

That is huge. Now maintaining the integrity of the damage prevention process while doing that, that's paramount. And again, to emphasize to stress, this is optional. It is not mandatory. Now one more thing I want to talk about before we close off here today. There's been a lot of confusion unfortunately, on the A LP and telus's new LOCATE policy. That's something that we're living with. We're doing our damnest to address the A LP. And I think that the biggest thing here is the A LP, the alternate locate provider is optional. You can still go down the path of the conventional locate request process and locating, whereas telus's new locate policy, it's not optional. Maybe Iain better you're coming from you because you're a utility representative. How does that affect you? You're also an excavator.

Iain Stables (39:57):

Yeah, it's had an impact on us. And in essence, what we've had to do is get private locates when we're working in an area that tell us implemented their new policy. I think where we're excited now, instead of having to get the traditional locator come out and then a private locator, I think what we're going to do is just start to utilize the A LP. But there has been confusion with it. And again, to reiterate, Mike, the A LP is optional where as you said, TELUS isn't. But I do think in time the A LP will be able to help some of the contractors out there that are trying to navigate the TELUS policy. It's just the launch has been a bit confusion for some of the

Mike Sullivan (40:46):

Contractors because TELUS is part of the consortium, right? Yeah. So now we have a dual process where it was supposed to be one. So maybe explain to me, I'm the excavator, I've selected the A LP, I'm going to work with a locate service provider directly. How does TELUS factor into that?

Iain Stables (41:11):

So if they're working through the A LP, Telus fully supports it good, those A LP approved locators, TELUS is a participant in the A LP. They'll have access to all auto telus's facility information and they'll be able to complete the one locate for all consortium members utilizing the A LP outside of the a p. You'll have a consortium locator come and mark some of the facilities, but then that contractor will in addition, have to select another locate provider to come out and mark that tlu. So the A LP really does streamline and things for the excavators in the TELUS area where they have their new policy.

Mike Sullivan (41:57):

And I got to say TELUS is working with the digging community to provide them access to data so they can do the locates and they can get that done. So it is a dual process in some regards, but TELUS is doing everything they can with the digging community to make it as simple as possible. But that's the reality we're in. That's the reality we're in and we're all working towards that. One last thing guys, before I let you go, and thanks for joining. This has been great. I dunno where the time has gone, but where do you see us in five years post a LP rollout?

Iain Stables (42:37):

I think five years from now, a LP is just going to be common vocabulary for people doing locates. I often have said through this process, I look at this similar to Hydrovac. I know when Hydrovac was first introduced, there was a lot of people that were like, oh, it's too expensive. I'm not going to do it. But Hydrovac has just become the norm. Now. There's

Mike Sullivan ([43:00](#)):

An army of Hydrovac trucks across the province,

Iain Stables ([43:02](#)):

And I see Alps similar to that. And you've touched on it, Mike, where the A LP has been used and used successfully. It ultimately does reduce damages that benefits everyone including the excavator. And I think in time when more and more people use it and get used to it, we'll see more and more locates done through the A LP, and it's just going to be a common thing. And I think in time we'll have much more utilities participating in the A LP as well.

Mike Sullivan ([43:33](#)):

What do you think, Ron? Where will we be in five years? And not just through Alberta, but Ontario too.

Ron Laidman ([43:38](#)):

Well, I was going to say, but Iain kind of took all of my talking points there on that one, but if you send

Mike Sullivan ([43:45](#)):

Them to in advance,

Ron Laidman ([43:49](#)):

No, but it is true. I think my hope would be that far more utility owners are going to be part of the program, and it's more all encompassing across the hundreds of various owners that there are. Because you see that in Ontario too. And not to go back to there too much, but the uptake in the program, it took many months to really get the volumes up there, but it increased significantly from one year to the next and as a few years in now. So it's had that uptake, it's had the outcomes that I think everyone's expecting from this program, and there's no reason Alberta won't be the same plus if we incorporate all the additional owners into the process too. Long term sky's the limit, really.

Mike Sullivan ([44:33](#)):

Yep. Guys, I like where this is going. I like what we've been able to accomplish. I'm very honored to be a part of this. Our objective from Utility Safety Partners is to reduce damage and protect the environment and the excavating community, the public safety. That's what our mandate is. And to ensure accurate locates every time. So this, I believe, is bringing us closer and closer to that objective. In my career, this is going to be recognized as a high water watermark, and I've had a couple that I've been honored to be part of and I'm really glad to be a part of this one. So thank you for that. And thanks for trusting Utility Safety partners to work with everybody to get this done. There's been an army of people involved in this, and we keep coming back to you gentlemen as the focal points. But the reality is this has been shouldered by a huge amount of people across the industry, subject matter experts at the notification center, the utility owners at digging community, and it really does take a village to get to where we are.

This transcript was exported on Aug 12, 2024 - view latest version [here](#).

So hats off to you, hats off to everybody involved and thank you for doing this with me today. I sincerely appreciate it. Thank you. Pleasure. Thanks Mike.

[\(45:59\)](#):

That's going to wrap things up on the Safety Moment podcast. I want to thank our producer stories and strategies, and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any directory you're listening on. And please do leave us a rating. You can follow us on X at Utility safety. We're also on Instagram and Facebook. If you'd like to send us a note, maybe have an episode idea. If you'd just like this podcast episode, email us at info@utilitysafety.ca and put podcast in the subject header. I'm Mike Sullivan, I'm the president of Utility Safety Partners. Click to know what's above and below. One click costs you nothing, not clicking. Well, that could cost you everything.