

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

You're 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 house, Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:15](#)):

Welcome everybody to the Safety Moment Podcast. That's the TSM podcast for the acronym world. My guest today is none other than Mr. Todd Scott, the executive director of the Canadian Common Ground Alliance. Todd joined us a little while ago to talk about where the CCGA was headed, and he has another six months at least in now and in his tenure as the executive director. And there's always lots happening and there's more happening now with the CCGA. So we want to touch in again with Todd and really sort of take off from where we left off last time. Todd, welcome back to the Safety Moment Podcast. You're making me look about as young as I could possibly look.

Todd Scott ([01:05](#)):

Well-

Mike Sullivan ([01:05](#)):

That says something about us.

Todd Scott ([01:07](#)):

Well, we are contemporary.

Mike Sullivan ([01:08](#)):

That's right. We're pretty close. Yeah.

Todd Scott ([01:11](#)):

Yeah. No, Mike, I'm really glad to be back. It's always a joy to be here and I really enjoy you and I get along quite well. Oh, we share some good history. Yeah, we do. Yeah, we have. And we certainly, as I say, paddled some boats, I guess, or went over some water.

Mike Sullivan ([01:28](#)):

Oh yeah.

Todd Scott ([01:30](#)):

Anyway, yeah, no, it's really good to be here and I'm excited to talk about the CCGA.

Mike Sullivan ([01:35](#)):

Well, you had a great event in Halifax, and it seems like just a couple of weeks ago, but it's months ago now. And that was the first time I think the CCG has held an event in Atlantic Canada. It was. I know there was some strategic meetings in the past going back at least 10 years ago, but this was the first event in Atlantic Canada. And great success that we had. The day we got there, I mean, on the day I got there, the weather was phenomenal. Didn't quite last, but no, it was a great event. So I want to talk a little bit about that. I mean, leading up to that, I know planning those things is not easy. Oh, yeah. It's

not easy. And doing it, hosting it in a place you'd never hosted it before, there's always some hesitation. It's a little bit of nervous.

(02:24):

Are we going to get the numbers we hope to get? But I think you got there. I mean, it was a great

Todd Scott (02:31):

Event. Oh yeah. Yeah, no, it was fantastic. And as you know, as I worked at it, I live out in Atlantic Canada and was one of the star at the LCGACGA. Anyway, I was always hesitant because I was wondering if I would get the draw that I needed to make it worthwhile. And not luckily, but when I was away and Scott Boudreau took over and he really took the ... He said, "Let's take a chance." And off you went. And you know what? Him and his team did a fantastic job. It was a really screaming success, to be honest with you. We had a great uptake in numbers. We were right sort of on par with what we've had for the last four or five years. Well, since coming out of COVID-

Mike Sullivan (03:23):

COVID, yeah. Which was a challenge. Yeah.

Todd Scott (03:25):

We had the same numbers that we've had, 135 delegates there. 36 speakers and 27 ... We had actually 30 exhibitors. Three of them had to cancel the last minute or whatever, couldn't make it. This was

Mike Sullivan (03:49):

Common unfortunately, but

Todd Scott (03:50):

Yep. So that was really good. We had really good representation from across the country. Certainly Alberta led the charge, and that's fairly normal with the CCGA in terms of just because of concentration of oil and gas and a few things. And that's the groups that are built for this. It's not our full target, but they certainly help us along. Oh, for sure. Yeah. We had probably ... And then second in line was in terms of Alberta was first in line. Second in line, of course, Ontario had great representation from Ontario. And then I was very proud to say that we had 41 people from 41 delegates from Atlantic Canada, 27 for Nova Scotia itself. And then we had good representation from New Brunswick, and we had a few from PEI as well.

Mike Sullivan (04:45):

No, it was great to see.

Todd Scott (04:46):

Yeah, absolutely.

Mike Sullivan (04:47):

I mean, it's always an opportunity. These events are always an opportunity to rekindle relationships, acquaintances. And for people to get together and for a number of years, we couldn't, right?

Todd Scott (04:57):

Well, what's happened subsequent to that, Scott has seen an uptick in his interest. They had their board meeting about maybe six weeks ago, and we had good participation. There's a lot of interest. One of the key sponsors, Dexter Structure from out here is a big civil construction. They do some wining. They're into everything really. They are certainly ... I think Dexter's president get up and younger guy gave a really nice personal story about his experience with locating and having damages and all that when he was out in the field as a project manager. So it really worked out well. I just want to mention too, we have 18 international people come as well. We had 14 from the US, one from Malaysia and one from the Netherlands, actually.

Mike Sullivan (05:59):

Yeah. Which again, having Atlantic Canada for some people across the pond, it's a little easier, right?

Todd Scott (06:05):

It makes it easier. Absolutely.

Mike Sullivan (06:06):

That's right. It's not like coming to middle of Canada or even Alberta, which it's a great draw, no question, but it's a little bit further. It's harder to get to. Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. Upload extra flights and nights and jet lag. No, it was good. And one of the key things we've been trying to do, the CCGA, is to have that engagement at the municipal level, at the local level. And there was some of that too. So it's really good to hear that Scott and the Atlantic Canada CGA has seen some benefit following the event. Oh,

Todd Scott (06:37):

Absolutely. Yeah, no, absolutely. Scott and I have spoken about that, and he was really pleased with how it went. And it was just a fantastic location. And the waterfront in Halifax is, I can't say enough about it.

Mike Sullivan (06:51):

Oh, it's wonderful. We had

Todd Scott (06:51):

A bit of rain. The weather turned on us a bit, but walking down and all the restaurants are there, it's a fairly big tourist area as well.

Mike Sullivan (07:01):

Well, I heard a lot of people saying, "I'm coming back in the summertime. I want a vacation here." Well, that's the

Todd Scott (07:06):

Maritimes. I can

Mike Sullivan (07:07):

Take you

Todd Scott (07:08):

To dozens of places like that.

Mike Sullivan (07:09):

We

Todd Scott (07:10):

Don't have mountains, but we got lots of coats.

Mike Sullivan (07:11):

Oh, got lots of coats. No, I love it. It was a great opportunity. And even for myself, I spent a lot of time there years ago during pipeline construction of an air time as a Northeast Pipeline.

Todd Scott (07:21):

Oh yeah right on, yeah.

Mike Sullivan (07:22):

Fell in love with it and it was an opportunity for me to go back. And I don't have a lot of those trips left, so that was fun. It was fun. Beyond that, we had great speakers, excellent event, a great draw. Yeah, no,

Todd Scott (07:35):

We did.

Mike Sullivan (07:36):

And it's an opportunity as well for the committees to connect in person, the best practices committee, education awareness, all the committees. And even the training and standards committee from Alberta, under Utility Safety Partners, their event, the Speakeasy was ... I know they were worried, how are we going to have anybody come? And there's probably 200 people jammed into that room.

Todd Scott (07:58):

It's a big endeavor on it. It's one of our key deliverables for the CCGA that every year. And it's the only real conference to be speak of that brings all damage prevention professionals, all the stakeholders together, and not just from one industry, but across the gamut. And

Mike Sullivan (08:14):

Not just from one province. Yeah,

Todd Scott (08:15):

Exactly. And it's a great opportunity for learning. We need them and honestly spreading the word. And I trust that the friendships or the contacts that are made at those things seem to carry on because you see

Announcer (08:30):

The same

Todd Scott (08:30):

Guys year after year after year. So it is really worthwhile and it's one of the things that we really want to expand. Kind of our goal moving forward with that is to try to broaden the scope of it a little bit in terms of can we draw more field folks in, it's always been the challenge. And how do we do that and make it a worthwhile event for them? Do we add some training opportunities with that or that type of stuff? So these things to actually put on the DPS, it's a full year. Well, we're starting for Calgary now. We actually already kicked off that. It's actually going out for call for papers here in a couple of weeks and then we'll be starting selling vendor space and all that.

Announcer (09:19):

And

Todd Scott (09:19):

Then it's putting that program together and making sure. And we take a lot of feedback during the event. We've amalgamated that together, making sure that we're keeping that in mind as we move it forward. So we're in a ... My role with our teams here and our committees is we're in a continuous improvement model all the time. So every time we try, we have to reevaluate where we're going, how we're getting there, and what's the best thing, and how are we serving our stakeholders.

Mike Sullivan (09:46):

And you mentioned during COVID, there was that gap, right? I mean, it was very challenging to keep the wheels going and you almost had to rebuild after that and there was this ... And I think it has. And

Todd Scott (09:59):

In a lot of ways. Yeah. In a lot of ways, I've felt that. Yeah. Oh, I think so. I think there's a real ... People seem to like it, and it's actually a good spot for our regulators to actually be involved with the utility owners, but actually, and also the contractors and whoever else, the field staff, to hear both sides of that story. Because really, our world is right from the notification center, right to the time they shovel and they're working in the fields. And one

Mike Sullivan (10:27):

Of my best takeaways from the CCGA in Halifax, and you and I have been around this for a long time. I was there from the very beginning, you were there shortly thereafter. And one of my

(10:37):

Favorite moments, I guess, or best takeaways, whether it was just me personally or mothers were seeing it, was at the end, I had the opportunity in the honor of saying we're coming to Calgary and inviting people to Calgary. And I asked the question, people put up your hand. It was the first time you've been here and a lot of hands went up, a lot of hands. Yeah, absolutely. And what that tells me is that the baton is being passed, right? And even having Tanya Colenko, she's up there and she's doing a great job promoting the event and being part of that key person resource on the education awareness committee, that baton is being passed to the younger generation. And I feel really good about that because it's in good hands, right? It's in good hands, the challenge continues, the quest continues, and we brought it so far and now it's for somebody else.

[\(11:34\)](#):

Now it's your turn. The journey is for you to take.

Todd Scott [\(11:38\)](#):

Yeah. When you did that and we spoke about it after, yeah, there's a lot less gray hair in the room than there was. I'm

Mike Sullivan [\(11:44\)](#):

Going to dye my hair for the next one. That would be funny you and I show up completely dark. Yeah, that'd be funny as hell.

Todd Scott [\(11:55\)](#):

So it is true that there feels like it's a bit of a turnover happening and I'm really excited about that, to be honest with you.

Mike Sullivan [\(12:04\)](#):

Oh, me too, because young people, new people, new ideas, fresh ideas, right? Yeah. And that was us not long ago, but all of a sudden it's like, not that I'm frustrated of ideas, but I don't know if I have as many good ones.

Todd Scott [\(12:19\)](#):

Well, you know what, Mike, when you mentioned what you had asked me to come back on and I was thinking about my tenure and when I first started this back with Atlantic, and I had this, and we got together and we were doing the 811 thing, and then I was trying to get Atlantic going and we're both working full time. I was working full time for Enbridge out here. So it was busy times, but man, it was exciting and I felt like we were doing something and all that. And then, so I was always very, very optimistic about it. And I'm going to tell you, I'm still, as I came back in this role, I was, as you know, worked with Liberty Utilities, and then I was actually basically working in the States for a couple years. I was living in Canada, sort of traveling down all the time with them.

[\(13:10\)](#):

And you know what? When I came back to this role as the executive director, I feel that same optimism. That's good. I really do. It's good. I think it's going to ... We're at another building block where we have to stabilize what we have. We've got a lot of work to do as we did. We went through the strategic planning last year, and now we're starting to implement some of that. And really our rezone to at, why are we here?

[\(13:40\)](#):

The CCGAs really exist to bring the amateur community together across at the national level, to bring that together, to continue to support not losing the influence of the regionals at the regional level, but trying to take whatever they're developing and whenever we can and be that national voice. And really, I do feel that we're working on stuff. Our strategic plan basically consists of ... Our strategic plan basically has four basic pillars in it. As we move forward, we're looking at strengthening governance. We're trying to prepare. We had a great governance model that we worked on many years ago. It's been a while since it was updated, but now we're looking at sort of maturing that a little bit, putting a little bit more meat on the bone in terms of policy, procedure, those types of things so that when we do go, if

there are opportunities to get involved in some national campaigns and looking towards ... If we have to do some lobbying or we have to handle some money, some of that money, we have all the policies, procedures, and the structure in place that'll allow us

Mike Sullivan ([15:01](#)):

To do

Todd Scott ([15:01](#)):

That. So basically, we're strengthening our governance and increasing stability, looking at our funding model, making sure that we are in a place we can get there. Succession planning, we talked about it's happening within our group as well. Well,

Mike Sullivan ([15:16](#)):

That's one of the things I wanted to touch on even on our board. I mean, we have some new people that are joining the board that things are changing. Jonathan Sherman.

Todd Scott ([15:23](#)):

Yeah. Well, and you can see that you can feel the energy too. They are coming with some energy and some great ideas and different experiences to show us to challenge us old guys that have been here for a little bit. So that's great. And I

Mike Sullivan ([15:36](#)):

Think there's nothing more healthy than that. And the event itself, going back to the event itself, it's an opportunity to build some momentum because during the year we have our regular jobs and we're slogging through whatever it might be and individually, and then you come to an event like that and it's like, you know what? We're all doing the same thing and we're working hard, but this is a bit of a gratification that we have made progress. It's a momentum builder. So I'm glad to hear that. And I'm anxious for this to come to Calgary.

Todd Scott ([16:10](#)):

I'm really looking forward to

Mike Sullivan ([16:11](#)):

It. It's actually the first time it's been in Calgary

Todd Scott ([16:13](#)):

Itself. In Calgary, I know. I know. We've been in Alberta several times usually. Yeah. I'm excited about being in Calgary. And I do think this one coming up, there's a lot of stuff going on with ... I'm really hoping we can get some of the municipalities involved. There's some big ... I mean, you guys, I don't know if it was necessarily damages, but some big renewal work in Calgary going on with their water piping or

Mike Sullivan ([16:44](#)):

Their transmission. Oh yeah, there's something in there for sure. In fact, I mean, if we could, I would love to be able to have somebody come in from the City of Calgary to talk about that. The City of Calgary is on my board of directors and my government relations contractor right now, Concentric Public Affairs, they are working to get me a meeting with Jeremy Farkas, who's our new mayor. And Mr. Farkas is very progressive. He was on city council for, I believe it was two terms, and he ran for mayor once before and at least once before, and this time he got it. And he brings a lot of, again, renewal and momentum, I think. And he wasn't in office very long when the latest breach happened on the water line. So I'm hoping that we can sort of bring these things together and have somebody there from the City of Calgary talk about that.

[\(17:42\)](#):

It wasn't a damage caused by third party damage, but this was akin to stress, corrosion, cracking, if you will, on a transmission pipeline, right? Exactly. And the politics aside, whether it was known in great detail of the condition of those pipes or not, I don't want to go there, but the fact is that this is what can happen if we don't pay attention. Absolutely. And the implications, not just in that one area of where the breach occurred, but across the entire city has been an issue. So that's something I'm hoping we can do. Now, going back to the conference in Halifax, there was the committees meet and one of the elements was damage information reporting tool, the dirt data.

Todd Scott [\(18:28\)](#):

Yes,

Mike Sullivan [\(18:29\)](#):

Absolutely. And it's always a challenge having anybody contribute to the dirt report, getting those voluntary reports of damage. I know here in Alberta, we had a significant drop in damage reported because one entity didn't report, and that's always a challenge. And so the dirt data is based only ... We have to look at it in kind of a very tight window because it's only those that are voluntarily reporting. Has there been any talk about how we can improve that? I mean, it comes down to the province itself. We need to get more submitters. What do you think is a silver bullet there?

Todd Scott [\(19:10\)](#):

It's a bit of an education piece. And I do think that ... I mean, just step back for a second, the actual dirt report is ... It's a great document. It's a tremendous amount of work,

Announcer [\(19:22\)](#):

And

Todd Scott [\(19:22\)](#):

It's the only thing ... It's a unicorn in Canada in terms of trying to get all of that data from all those different infrastructure types and owners into one document. And as you mentioned, it's voluntary, so it's anonymous. So that's by design, but it is a bit of an Achilles heel sometimes because, as you said, our numbers drop significantly in 24 across the country. And when you go to try to figure out, okay, what happened to that because of an eminence and all that, it's very difficult. You hear rumors and it's hard to put it together. But I will say that

[\(20:01\)](#):

We need to continue and we really do need to start to educate more, probably a little bit more of a coordinated approach across all hearing, across everywhere, and try to make sure and make sure that we're producing stuff in that report that our stakeholders want that I'll find useful, and providing it in a manner which they can use easily, access easily, compare themselves to others, dashboarding, all those types of things. So we are trying to ... We are working at that. I'm actually just from a collection. So we are in already collected data. All the data is in except for one region, which we'll get here, and then we'll start the analysis. And just in terms of all I can tell you, it's not been washed yet, but all I can say is we're up a little bit marginally within two or three, maybe four or 500 from last year we're up a bit, but I would suggest we need to really encourage ... We have to start looking at how can we look at who submitted in the past without somehow, and then say, okay, if you've submitted in the past, why did you stop and what do we need to do to get you to jump back in?

[\(21:19\)](#):

And then we've got to sort of keep moving that forward. And again, it's about making sure that there's value in what they're doing.

[\(21:28\)](#):

And I think I look at one sector that doesn't report a lot, which has a lot of infrastructure in the ground and is hit a lot, is municipal infrastructure, really. At the end of the day, and we have the electric and there's all kinds, but we certainly ... The municipal folks, we need to figure out a way to get more involved with the Federation of Municipalities or whoever, and get them into our field, into our fold and contributing and seeing what the value is. Because quite frankly, the digging, all the educational opportunities, all that stuff, it all comes back. You drive those best practices, you drive those educational moments with data. And society today is driven by data decision, database decisions, but we need to have the data to start with so that we can start. So I don't have a silver bullet mic. I think it's just going to be hard work.

[\(22:28\)](#):

I don't

Mike Sullivan [\(22:29\)](#):

Have it either. I haven't found it yet.

Todd Scott [\(22:31\)](#):

And I'm trying, but I do think it's going to take a common count, I think maybe a more national campaign at that and start to ... And I think that's one of the things that I'm really looking forward to as one of our other strategic initiatives is to increase our engagement with, is increase engagement and our value add our organization with a stronger message at the national level.

Mike Sullivan [\(23:01\)](#):

Yeah. One of those areas that we talk about dirt obviously in the submitters, and we've been fortunate enough to have a number of submitters here in Alberta, a high number. Now it's been scrubbed and we got rid of those entities that weren't submitting and I think we're still ... A number of parties that do submit

Announcer [\(23:23\)](#):

Damages.

Mike Sullivan ([23:24](#)):

And again, anonymously, it really helps. And one of the things I would like to see expand with our dirt reporting is how we differ from the CGA in the US in terms of dirt data. I would like to see us be able to manipulate the reporting tool. We've talked about the value of reducing damages because we have predominantly locates come through the web rather than the phone. And we've established and reaffirmed that damages reduce when their locates are made on the web, and which goes into the best practices and everything else. But also, I think we also need to look at ... The way locates are happening today has changed in the last number of years. There's a designated locator in Ontario. Quebec has a similar program now where NLG is, they are allowing contractors to locate and it's reducing damages. Here in Alberta, we have the alternate locate provider program, which if I look at the comparative data to dirt and the number of damages per locate request or per notification, and they look at the same value for ALP, and it's like a 99% reduction in damages compared to conventional methods.

([24:43](#)):

And when you have these things, this is all data, right? When we have these things and we look at that through the lens of a dirt report, or we incorporate that into a dirt report, say, "Okay, well, this is clearly a better way of doing things, so this is a better practice. Now let's initiate a best practice for that." And over time, as you know, a best practice will influence standards, will influence legislation. Absolutely. And that's why we want to talk about best practices for a moment. I know it's a challenge because it's a consensus document, and I think that's holding us back. I think we have to look at that as a board and say, "Is that really the best way to go?" And ask ourselves, or do we go with a majority vote or something like that?

Todd Scott ([25:28](#)):

Well, I've thought about this a lot and I'm not sure ... It is a challenge. And I think what happens, and having sat in on this years ago and then I was starting to reintroduce myself to it now, the challenge, and this is again, a bunch of our key deliverables, right? Yeah. It's one of the three pillars. Yeah, one of the three pillars, exactly. And so I'm with you in the sense that we have to maybe sort of rethink the approach. We have committees and most of the larger or more established CGAs like yourself in Alberta and Ontario, Quebec, they have a best practices sort of group that works within the region. And one thing that's a frustration for those folks is that they do stuff and then they send it up to the national committee and it spins for a while because of the process that we have.

([26:30](#)):

So one of the initiatives I have is with our chairs of the committee, and I'm working with them now and trying to change their ways a little bit, is to try to get that process speeded up.

Announcer ([26:42](#)):

And

Todd Scott ([26:42](#)):

I think we have to ... The other thing I said quite, when I sat in on Ontario, it was not that long ago, and I just said, "Look, guys, it's not a regulation, it's not a standard, it's a best practice. If you're not doing it today, it doesn't mean it's not the right answer. It just means that you're not doing it today."

Mike Sullivan ([27:00](#)):

That's right.

Todd Scott ([27:01](#)):

And

Mike Sullivan ([27:02](#)):

Recognizing a best practice doesn't mean you have to do it.

Todd Scott ([27:06](#)):

Right away. You know what I mean? You like to try to move yourself towards it, and we really want to try to get that attitude. And not that people don't go there to say no and they don't go, but it's just one of those, it's just a natural sort of-

Mike Sullivan ([27:21](#)):

It's

Todd Scott ([27:22](#)):

A hurdle. I've seen it. You know what? I've seen it in other places too where I've been, and it really does sit, well, we shouldn't write it down. Well, no, it's a best practice, you know what I mean? Yeah. So that type of a thing. So we want to get there. And I honestly, I do think getting the process together, one thing I worry about, and I have to make sure that the regional best practice committee, they have the documents they produce, but they can't be in conflict with the national one. That's my only concern. I have no trouble if somebody has ... You guys want to do work and all that, but I just got to make sure that it's congruent-

Mike Sullivan ([28:02](#)):

We're holding up the national best practice.

Todd Scott ([28:04](#)):

You know what I mean? Or we are holding it up and it's adding to what we're trying to say. Ours probably may or may not be a little bit more

([28:14](#)):

General just because of the consensus approach that we're using now, but I agree and I don't disagree with you. And going back to the data too, Mike, just I agree, we do have to get that there. We have to be sure though that when we put something, we have data, but we have to really examine that data to make sure what is driving that change. It could be no question what you've done, but there's other factors there. Are you getting the same reporting? Are we getting ... You know what I mean? Like that type of stuff. Because again, if it was mandatory reporting on all this, it'd be less of a thing, but it's

Mike Sullivan ([28:51](#)):

Not sometimes we would have. Yeah. What would the outcome be, right? Yeah.

Todd Scott ([28:54](#)):

Yeah, exactly. And I would love to have ... And as long as we can get to somewhere where we statistically ... A valid conclusion that we can back up and somebody can't shoot holes in it all over the

place. And I don't, and we haven't done that, but it's just one of those things that ... If we can't make the data fit the need, we need the need to fit the data.

Mike Sullivan ([29:19](#)):

Well, that's right.

Todd Scott ([29:20](#)):

That's

Mike Sullivan ([29:21](#)):

Right. Well, and I know there's ... I talked to my colleagues who are part of the best practice committee here in Alberta, and yeah, there's frustration. I've been frustrated with it, the process. I've submitted TRs that seems so logical and they come back and say, no, we're not doing that. So how can you ignore the data? I mean, the data is king. We say it all the time, right? Absolutely. If the data is king, then how can we say no, I don't get it.

Todd Scott ([29:44](#)):

No, exactly. No. And quite frankly, that's one of my things that I've engaged with those committees and attending a lot of the meetings. I mean, I certainly can't be the driving force on all of them, but I am in the room and when I see these types of ... I'm there more to shift the attitude or the frame of mind is where I see my role in that is to make sure that we enter that discussion with an open mind, move ourselves from regional to the national, and then think about it from that perspective.

Mike Sullivan ([30:18](#)):

I appreciate you being able to do that. And you're carrying that message from the board. Let's talk about the board for a minute. I briefly referenced it a few moments ago, but we're seeing a turnover there too. Saskatchewan, Jonathan Sherman is fairly new. He's a little over a year now, I think, in the role. And again, brings that new energy, new blood. He lives and breathes safety, so it's a great fit. And they had a couple of years ago now, I guess, that the Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance absorbed SaaS first call. And so they are one entity now. Quebec did it many years ago now. I mean, it's got to be getting close to 10 years, if not ... Yeah, I guess close to 10 years. We did it here in Alberta five, six years ago. And now we're seeing a transition potentially in British Columbia where they are looking for a new executive director and how they go about that.

([31:13](#)):

I think it's who knows, right? Who knows how that works?

Todd Scott ([31:16](#)):

Yeah. I know they're in the market now. They've advertised and I think they are getting some ... Last I heard that they had some applications and some reasonable people, but I don't know if they've gone through the universe processes as well.

Mike Sullivan ([31:34](#)):

No, I'm not sure where they are, where they're at. But it's a big change. I mean, Dave Baspali, he was there for many years, 17 years, I think, in that role. And he saw the CCGA, the birth of the CCGA. He

went through the legislation objective. He went through the challenges we've had financially. He went through the whole COVID thing. And so did Shannon Doka and the people who were there before her. I mean, I've been there since the beginning, and the time will come here when that baton has passed, right? And for you as well, and Ontario, that's a good thing. And going back to seeing that new energy, the new people come in like Jonathan, and we're going to see more that are more- Scott Boudreau as well. Yes. Thank you. Yes, exactly. Smart, young people. And I don't realize they're younger than me until I see a picture of all of us together and say, "Holy crap, who's that old guy?" Yeah, me too.

[\(32:36\)](#):

Yeah. And by the way, while we're doing this, we're recording this, every now and then I look at the screen, I think, "Wow, I think our moms dressed us this morning."

[\(32:47\)](#):

Yeah, purely. So brothers from a different mother. But anyway, I'm really excited to where that's going too. And change is hard. Change is hard because we build these relationships and friendships over time and then we see people go. And that's a hard thing. And I think part of it's because we see our own fate and we just lend ourselves to the cause for a while and then we give it over to somebody else. But the fact is the cause remains and the cause continues, right? Well,

Todd Scott [\(33:21\)](#):

And it's bigger than us. And quite frankly, and there's still a tremendous amount of work to do. And I don't see it ever stopping. There's a lot of stuff coming with AI and we hear of all this innovation and I'm really looking forward to, in Calgary, hopefully we'll get some more ability or more time to talk with some of these folks and some of these subject matter experts on this.

[\(33:48\)](#):

I find AI is really going to be helpful in the notification centers to think with quality management and quality assurance on your tickets and all that kind of stuff, that's kind of a no-brainer. And I do think there's some work to be done once we get the data in the field from an as-built perspective. So one of the big challenges we're going to face moving forward is that if we want to have that, take advantage of all that innovation and all that technology, the AI abilities, we need to get ourselves on some more common base mapping so we can actually put these maps together. And then we need some ways ... What recently was at a conference and got an opportunity to talk to a bunch of folks about this whole idea of collecting as we're doing locates, collecting data, collecting not just the coordinates, but the metadata that comes behind it, so we can actually use that data to do quality on the records and enough we get enough shots on one pipe over spatial over time and enough different people doing it.

[\(35:00\)](#):

Those are golden. You

Mike Sullivan [\(35:01\)](#):

Know what that tells me though? It sounds like we need some really smart people. Well, you

Todd Scott [\(35:06\)](#):

Know what though, Mike? I was just going to say, some of the work that Ontario's doing and you're doing on training and certifications and all that good stuff is paramount to having that. We can't have the guy that's going to get the locator in his hand for six minutes and then he says, "Oh, there, go locate."

Mike Sullivan ([35:25](#)):

Run off to the next one.

Todd Scott ([35:26](#)):

People that understand, we need to know that we've got a professional people out there collecting that data, doing the job the right way, having some sense of ... I always hear this argument about number of frequency level and what frequencies. It's not just in the old days, we used to use an 810 and light up the whole area and just go and locate what we could and then we get the multifrequency. And then now it's about choosing that frequency and knowing that resistance on the pipe and knowing what frequency should be there. So it should be used to optimize that you're not on a phantom signal or being drug over by another conductor in the ground, you're on the one you

Announcer ([36:05](#)):

Want.

Todd Scott ([36:06](#)):

And so these are all really great initiatives that you guys have going too that I certainly want to make sure we continue to encourage. And my role in this is as we move forward, as we've talked about a lot, is really about making sure that I'm aware of what's going on everywhere and then try to bring everybody into it so that we can take the learnings that you guys are developing and the programs and is there application for those elsewhere that we can encourage people to do and know about and replicate really. Oh,

Mike Sullivan ([36:40](#)):

Exactly. And this is where we technology, AI, like you said, right? It's going to play a huge factor going forward here in Alberta Utility Safety Partners, we are going to embrace AI. We're cautious. We're

Announcer ([36:52](#)):

Moving

Mike Sullivan ([36:52](#)):

Forward cautiously. We're developing AI policies to begin with and then determining what areas of operations we want to seek influence from artificial intelligence to improve the process, not necessarily to replace people because I think that's what first things people think. It's got to influence the process. It's got to influence improved outcomes and all that takes a lot of policy work and deep think before you turn it on.

Todd Scott ([37:20](#)):

Well, and I agree with you totally. I don't foresee the day when AI will replace locators, for instance.

Mike Sullivan ([37:26](#)):

No, I know.

Todd Scott ([37:27](#)):

But that's not going to happen.

[\(37:29\)](#):

But what it can do is if you do have a set of as-builts that we know and spatially are correct and we got to have a high confidence level, at the end of the day, you could equip, this is a pie in the sky thing, you could equip an excavator with a sensor on its GPS sensor on its bucket, and if it knows there's something there, you have to override it to make the hook. It doesn't dig. That's right. Especially on May, the trouble with where AI, our records have to be so good, that's the trouble. And there's always something missing from the records until for quite a while. So that's a challenge, but I do think that, and there's a risk that will overdepend on it or overtrusted or overconfident with it. But

Mike Sullivan [\(38:18\)](#):

Trial and error, right? I mean, you don't want to have too many errors in a wrong spot. One of the things I want to talk about as well was one of the moments at the CCGA event was when Sereno gave their presentation. I think a lot of people, including myself, were like, "Oh, wait a minute." And there was obviously some comments and discussion thereafter, but really it came down to data, right? It came down to the data that they were provided to analyze and based on the data, that was the analysis that damages, societal costs of damage dropped, but not because it dropped, but more so because of the data.

Todd Scott [\(39:03\)](#):

The two factors that I have that I ... And I've been looking into this and I don't have the last ... I actually just reached out to Sereno this week, but what I can tell you is we had a big drop from the number and I think it's magnitudes, but smaller, but the thing about that is that we also had a really big drop, as we said before, in our damage reporting. So for instance, when the 2016 number or whatever was, initially, after they did the original work, it was in 2014, they did it for Quebec, and then we expanded that the next year to do 14 and of course in 15 is when they put the report out. So in 16, we expanded that out to conclude all of our data in what's using the same model, which was okay, but the real ... And I think we found a lot of the data at the time, and I don't recollect this personally, but I think we found the data to ... It was hard because we weren't collecting the right data to actually put it in the model that they built.

[\(40:24\)](#):

So I suspect they had had a number of 125 million for Quebec based on the 2014 data.

[\(40:31\)](#):

And I think Interpolation took that and off it went and we applied that across the country. Well, that number that we had for reported damages that year was a little over 12,000 ...

Mike Sullivan [\(40:44\)](#):

Yeah. It

Todd Scott [\(40:45\)](#):

Was north of 12,000 at damages. And then, so this year, when they redid this year for 2024, actually, we had 8,300 or so. So that's a 30% drop rate there. You know what I mean? In terms of-

Mike Sullivan [\(41:01\)](#):

It sounds like we're doing great, but as we talked about the

Todd Scott ([41:04](#)):

Top of the call, that's not the case. I actually presented the dirt report at the King Gas Association conference, and I was asked, and I said when we were presenting it, I was like, "I would like to take credit for this, but I have a feeling that we've had a reduction in reporting, but I can't put my finger on it, but I'm going to wait and see how, if this trend continues or if we are going to ramp up up a bit." But regardless, I mean, regardless of all that, we are seeing a drop in damages year over year over year. There's no question. I feel that the trend was there long from. And so now, what did they do to the model this year when they redid it? So they broadened the scope. So the old model we had was only based on three or four sets of data regions because nobody else was collecting enough that was significant.

([42:05](#)):

So now they've expanded that across everybody's data. So they're using the whole data piece and they've expanded the costing framework. So what goes into the direct cost of the direct cost, but certainly they've added four new categories, which avoid road construction or road accident costs, excavation costs, water supply or water interruption costs and property damage from water breaks with something-

Mike Sullivan ([42:32](#)):

That's significant.

Todd Scott ([42:33](#)):

Yeah, exactly. And now the trouble is our water reporting needs to increase actually for that to kick in for that last one, right? And then they've upgraded the congestion number, their emergency response number, emergency services costs, power, service interruption, internet interruption, they've increased, they've done a bit more work to sort of update the methodology to make it a little bit more pertinent. But the one thing that they really did that I think probably was the biggest culprit of moving it downward was they went through Statistics Canada and they developed a based on a census subdivision and they broke Canada into 14 or 4,000 different little blocks and how that is, is how there's a factor that would be applied to the cost based on population density and all these other factors- Which will drive that number down. Because let's face it. It dilutes numbers and drive the number down.

([43:42](#)):

Yeah, exactly. So for instance, in my subdivision here, we hit a two inch gas main. It's a different response than it is in downtown Calgary.

Mike Sullivan ([43:53](#)):

Yes, that's right.

Todd Scott ([43:54](#)):

Or a four inch gas main in Calgary. And the other thing they tried to do, so what they reported at the symposium, there was a lot of gas damages in Ontario that didn't have, from the Ontario numbers that didn't have locations provided with them. So a big portion of those didn't get into

Mike Sullivan ([44:15](#)):

That number. We did give the data, right? In the

Todd Scott ([44:17](#)):

Calculation. Yeah, exactly. So subsequent to them, they went back and they put a three level damage classification sort of scenario in minor being service line, and this could be a water service, could be any utility service. So minor would be considered a service line drop, a service line or a drop line, whatever, a service drop. Then they had moderate, which would be distribution line, and then the major would be transmission line. So if it was electric transmission or water transmission, and there's a factor that they apply to that.

Mike Sullivan ([44:59](#)):

So really what it comes down to is this is a completely different set of analyses compared to the first report.

Todd Scott ([45:06](#)):

Exactly. And my fear is, or not my fear, but my realization is, is that I'm looking at the model now to try to figure out exactly what we need to maximize the ability of this thing, and then I've got to change the dirt model to actually collect it. You know what I mean? I'm glad that's the job you

Mike Sullivan ([45:26](#)):

Have. And not

Todd Scott ([45:28](#)):

Me, I'd be lost.

Mike Sullivan ([45:29](#)):

Yeah.

Todd Scott ([45:31](#)):

So really our improvement probably, I hate to say this, it'll probably be 2026 report because it takes that long and because the dirt model is the way it is, we've already collected 25 or already collected 25's data now, so it's going in the hopper now, right? So crunch it out.

Mike Sullivan ([45:51](#)):

Well, I appreciate looking into that because it was a big question mark and there had to be a logical answer and it's not an easy answer. It's not a straight line. No, it's

Todd Scott ([46:00](#)):

Not. And I don't know if it's completely full yet, but like I said, I'm just waiting to get that last document from them. It's a four or five page summary and it'll just give me some better feeling about it so I can see exactly.

Mike Sullivan ([46:14](#)):

Well, Sierra know is nothing if they aren't thorough and they- Oh, absolutely. They're professionals. Oh my God, yeah.

Todd Scott ([46:20](#)):

Yeah. And I have nothing to say. I have nothing but good to say about the integrity and what they're trying to provide us with. It's just we have to make sure we get the right inputs, basically.

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

So before we wrap up here, Todd, I mean, so we come into Calgary, we have an offsite coming up here in May in Ottawa. What's the one thing you're looking forward to the most in Calgary?

Todd Scott ([46:43](#)):

Oh, I'm

Mike Sullivan ([46:44](#)):

Really- Besides seeing me and hanging out with me.

Todd Scott ([46:47](#)):

And maybe the Great Cup. Yeah, it's the week right off following the Great Cup. It's the 17th to 19th, I believe, if I remember

Mike Sullivan ([46:58](#)):

Correctly. I know a guy who might get some tickets, so let me know.

Todd Scott ([47:01](#)):

Well, we'll see.

Mike Sullivan ([47:05](#)):

Nothing like starting a conference hung over. That's not a good thing.

Todd Scott ([47:12](#)):

Mondays will be full of meetings too.

Announcer ([47:13](#)):

Yeah.

Todd Scott ([47:14](#)):

So no, I'm really looking forward to getting the gang together really again and starting to have these discussions around promoting. And it may be where we start to talk about, let's start to kick off the dirt reporting and try to figure out how we can drive that forward as a collective. Yeah, very much. Yep. I think that's a good opportunity for there. I think there is going to be ... We are looking at some ... Again, we'll start to talk about the call for papers, but I do really want us to focus a little bit on AI and trying to figure out what that potential is and figure out how to harness that a little bit. And I'm really looking forward to ... We had a really engaging ... I wasn't there, unfortunately, but we had really engaging in

Saskatchewan, two years ago, and I really looking forward to Calgary and basically Alberta coming together and it's such a ... I always have a great time when I go out there, so I'm just going to be fun, man.

Mike Sullivan ([48:29](#)):

Oh yeah, it will be fun.

Todd Scott ([48:31](#)):

And certainly getting our board together and the committees and all that good stuff is ...

Mike Sullivan ([48:38](#)):

I'm anxious again for me. I mean, I love having everybody come out. This is great, showcase our home, but I'm anxious to see that continued rebirth, I guess, of the CCGA with that younger set. I'm really anxious to see that. I know it's not a one of, but I see it happening and I'm really anxious to see that continue. Anyway, Todd, thanks for doing this with me again. Thanks for being on the podcast. Lots to talk about CCGAYs and I'm glad we have you at the helm.

Todd Scott ([49:08](#)):

Yeah. Well, I'm really happy to be here. And again, I can't say how optimistic I feel. I'm energized by it. It's been a really good way for me to stay in the business and keep moving forward. I'm excited to be here and looking forward to it all.

Mike Sullivan ([49:26](#)):

No, you're the right guy. Thanks, buddy. Appreciate it.

Todd Scott ([49:28](#)):

Okay. Appreciate it, Mike. We'll talk to you soon.

Mike Sullivan ([49:34](#)):

That's going to wrap things up on the podcast. I want to thank our guest today, Mr. Todd Scott, the executive director of the Canadian Common Ground Alliance for joining us. Always great to hear what is going on at the national level in the damage prevention world here in Canada. Also want to thank our producers stories and strategies, and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any director you're listening on. And please do leave a rating. We appreciate it. You can follow us on X@utility_safety, on Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook, we're everywhere. And if you'd like to send us a note, maybe you have an episode idea, you can email us at info@utilitysafety.ca. Just put podcast in the subject header and that'll get to us. And if you want to be, here's something new, you could even sponsor the Safety Moment podcast. If you want to do that, reach out to us the same way.

([50:23](#)):

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, that could cost you everything.