



## Late utility locates delay work on infrastructure and housing in Ontario: RCCAO

The recovery of Ontario's economy is largely dependent on the health of the construction industry but delays in getting utilities to provide timely locates of underground gas, water and telecommunications lines are presenting roadblocks to building essential infrastructure and much-needed housing.

Contractors continue to regularly face lengthy wait times which can have serious and multi-faceted repercussions, including work stoppage, significant delays in project completion and increased project cost.

Long delays for marking of underground services can be costly. For example, each hour of idle time in the sewer and watermain sector costs \$1,000. Contractors lose \$10,000 a day when they must wait for utility locates, which only adds to the cost of a new home. In the roads sector, the price tag is \$20,000 a day.

Ontario's mandatory One Call system allows homeowners, contractors, developers, builders and other excavators to make one locate request to a call centre instead of separate calls to each utility. The province has a deadline of five business days for locate responses, but utilities often don't respond until weeks after the date. It is estimated that 85 per cent of locate requests are late.

Some of the solutions that RCCAO has called for to improve

the One Call system include restructuring the organization's board of directors to include more non-utility representatives; providing opportunities to safely share locates among multiple contractors for the same job; extending the validity period of locates to at least 60 days; restructuring how locates are delivered; modifying the reporting and record-keeping for locate responses; and eliminating the need for re-locates on non-linear excavation construction sites below a certain depth

"We appreciate the fact that there have been updates to One Call by-laws and compliance policies, but much more must be done to ensure that essential infrastructure and housing work across Ontario is not unnecessarily held up," said RCCAO executive director Nadia Todorova. "Substantial delays in getting timely locates continue to be experienced at construction and infrastructure sites across the region, leading to delayed projects, uncertainty and increased project cost. We need immediate and meaningful action to ensure the delivery of timely and cost-effective projects."

Contractors are trying to catch up on projects that were delayed because of COVID-19. They need assurances that there will be a significant improvement in response times for the delivery of utility markings, especially if construction is to help lead the province's recovery efforts from the pandemic.

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