



CANADA

Debates of the Senate

3rd SESSION

•

40th PARLIAMENT

•

VOLUME 147

•

NUMBER 98

SAFE DIGGING MONTH

Statement by:

The Honourable Rod A. A. Zimmer

Thursday, March 24, 2011

THE SENATE

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SAFE DIGGING MONTH

Hon. Rod A. A. Zimmer: Honourable senators, I rise today to make you aware that April is Safe Digging Month. All Canadians are urged to, “Call Before You Dig,” to prevent damage to buried facilities, in the interests of worker safety, public safety, protection of the environment and the preservation of the integrity of the underground infrastructure that provides goods and services essential to society.

April is the traditional start of the annual digging season in Canada. Homeowners are planning their outside projects and contractors are gearing up.

Honourable senators, the Canadian Common Ground Alliance has proclaimed April as Safe Digging Month to increase public awareness of the need to call before you dig. The Canadian Common Ground Alliance, chaired by my friend, Mr. Mike Sullivan, who is in the gallery today, is the voice of Canada’s regional partner CGAs, dedicated to working towards damage prevention solutions that will benefit all Canadians. Through shared responsibility amongst all stakeholders, the CCGA works to reduce damage to underground infrastructure, ensuring public safety, environmental protection, and the integrity of services by promoting effective damage prevention practices.

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The surface of Canada, both urban and rural, is underlain with an extensive but hidden underground network of pipes and cables that provides goods and services essential to today’s society. Buried facilities include communications, electrical, gas distribution, sewer, water, storm drainage, irrigation, oil and gas production lines, and hydrocarbon transmission pipelines.

In Alberta alone, the extent of the underground infrastructure is estimated at more than 1.5 million kilometres and includes some 400,000 kilometres of high-pressure pipelines.

Honourable senators, each year there are numerous instances where the integrity of this infrastructure is jeopardized by improperly conducted ground disturbances. Failure to call before you dig to have buried facilities identified and their locations marked prior to disturbing the ground is the most frequent cause of buried facility damage. The consequences of damage to buried facilities can include disruption of essential services, property damage, environmental contamination, personal injury and even death. A disruption of our parliamentary services happened right here on Parliament Hill last fall.

All ground disturbers, including contractors, homeowners and landowners, can save time and money and keep themselves and our provinces safe and connected by following ground disturbance and buried facility damage prevention best practices. These include making that simple call to one’s provincial one-call system in advance of any ground disturbance project, waiting for the buried facility locates to be done by the facility owners, respecting the locate marks, exposing any conflicting buried facilities, and digging with care.

Honourable senators, in the interest of the safety of all Canadians, please remember to call before you dig, so that we continue to live in a safe country in this great adventure we call Canada.
