

The Challenge

The long-standing challenge was ensuring timely responses to locate requests across Ontario. We needed to identify the root causes of delays and determine the most effective path forward.

This challenge was not unique to one organization; it was shared across industry and government. The goal was to find solutions that met stakeholder needs while ensuring essential work in Ontario could proceed in a safe and timely way.

Looking back, Ontario Dig Authority's focus on completing locates properly and on time was the right vision, but the approach—how the work was done, who was involved, and what needed to change—was not working.

Many stakeholders offered valuable ideas, but they did not always understand one another's concerns or the reasons behind them. We needed to shift our approach so people would listen, focus on the issue, and get to resolution.

We have made significant progress and continue to come together with industry stakeholders and the provincial government to deliver outcomes and continuous improvements that support Ontario Dig Authority's mandate and help Ontario build the infrastructure it needs in a timely and responsible manner.

The Approach

We needed to find a way to build recognition for the skills our industry requires and create a practical path to make meaningful change happen. This was not achieved through a single action or by one organization alone. It required people from across the industry to understand the vision, see the value of the proposed actions, and support them collectively. While many in industry and government may not fully recognize the pivotal moment when this shift occurred, we brought both groups together to better understand the issue, develop shared actions, and deliver measurable results.

The Outcome

The measurable results and industry impact are reflected in more timely locate completions, fewer delays, and a continued decline in damages—ultimately supporting public and worker safety. This will remain an ongoing area of focus that must be measured, managed, and acted on. Ontario Dig Authority is now defining the role it must play to drive the results and outcomes the industry needs, and it is gaining recognition for capabilities. Compared with many other jurisdictions in North America, Ontario is moving toward a leading position. Continued streamlining will be essential for Ontario Dig

Authority so all stakeholders can better manage costs and timelines while supporting the infrastructure needs of the province.

Lessons Learned

- Do not assume you understand others' perspectives. Take time to listen, reflect, and build the relationships needed for shared success.
- Recognize that government manages many competing priorities. To support sound decisions for our industry, we needed to be a strong, unified voice and an active partner rather than assuming government would resolve the issue on its own.
- At times, progress requires the courage to act; without action, issues remain stagnant. The challenge is knowing when the moment is right.

One thing we now understand more clearly is that sustained success depends on working as one industry—bringing together construction, infrastructure owners, municipalities, provincial government, and the locating sector—to better understand one another's businesses and develop shared solutions that meet the province's needs.

