



## *Media Release*

**For Immediate Release**

**March 31, 2014**

### **Government of Saskatchewan declares April 2014 *Safe Digging Month* across Saskatchewan**

As contractors and homeowners begin preparing for another active construction season, the Government of Saskatchewan, in partnership with Sask 1<sup>st</sup> Call and the Saskatchewan Common Ground Alliance (SCGA), has declared April to be *Safe Digging Month* to remind the public of the importance of digging safely around underground infrastructure.

"Saskatchewan's economic growth continues to be led by a high volume of construction activity and we want to see this work done safely throughout the year," Energy and Resources Minister Tim McMillan said. "The first step in any outdoor project, such as building a fence, deck, garage or landscaping, involves the Sask 1st Call line locating service. Educating people about the safe digging process helps prevent injuries, property damage and service outages to communities."

Unsafe excavation practices are the leading cause of damage to buried infrastructure, and Sask 1<sup>st</sup> Call's goal is to end accidental line damage. Once a customer requests a line locate, Sask 1<sup>st</sup> Call notifies underground infrastructure owners of potential ground disturbance work occurring near their facilities. These companies require a minimum of two full working days' notice to locate and mark their underground lines, at no charge, allowing the digging project to safely proceed.

"Sask 1<sup>st</sup> Call has successfully worked with contractors and homeowners for over a decade to ensure ground disturbance work is done safely," Barb Tchozewski, Manager of Sask 1<sup>st</sup> Call, said. "Whether you're doing a major excavation project or some finishing touches in your yard, be sure to call Sask 1st Call to have those underground lines marked in advance."

Failing to have underground infrastructure lines properly marked can result in significant consequences, including lengthy project delays, costly damage to lines and equipment, disruption of essential services, property damage, environmental concerns, along with serious personal injury and even death.

Damage prevention is a shared responsibility and is in everyone's best interest reminds Daryl Posehn, Executive Director of the SCGA. However, he cautions that safe digging responsibilities don't end once a line is located.

"Accidental line damage is a very dangerous rising trend that puts people and their surrounding communities at great risk," Posehn said. "This is a direct result of people digging first and planning later so it's really critical that individuals have a safe dig plan in place before beginning

to work. With proper planning put solidly in the forefront – and having a line locate completed is the first step – the excavation process can be done safely and quickly.”

The Contractor Safety Awareness Association is holding a series of Contractor Safety Breakfasts starting the first week of April in 29 locations across the province to help promote *Safe Digging Month*. Watch for a media advisory with information about the breakfast being held in your area.

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The **SCGA** is a member-driven, non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring worker and public safety, environmental protection and the integrity of services by promoting effective damage prevention practices in connection with underground infrastructure activities. For more information, please go to [www.scga.ca](http://www.scga.ca).

**Sask 1<sup>st</sup> Call** is a non-profit “**Call Before You Dig**” underground facility location service for contractors and homeowners who are planning to dig or excavate. Subscriber companies require two full working days’ notice to locate the underground facilities at the project site, allowing work to continue without impacting buried infrastructure, or disrupting service to customers. Sask. 1<sup>st</sup> Call has 56 members (including SaskEnergy/TransGas, SaskPower and SaskTel) and represents more than 400,000 kilometres of buried infrastructure across Saskatchewan. For more information, please go to [www.sask1stcall.com](http://www.sask1stcall.com)