

Landscape Ontario Podcast

One Click, No Chaos:

How to avoid a *dig* mistake

Host: Karina Sinclair

Guest: Jean Lépine, Ontario One Call

Transcription

Intro:

Karina: Hey there, welcome back to a ground-breaking episode of the *Landscape Ontario Podcast*! I'm your host, Karina Sinclair, and today we're talking about something that might not be the flashiest part of the job — but trust me, it's one of the most important: making sure you *call or click before you dig*.

If you've ever clipped a fibre optic cable, nicked a water pipe or had to shut down a job because of a surprise underground utility... you already know why this matters. And if you haven't? Well, let's keep it that way.

We've got Jean Lépine on the podcast today — he's the Chief Strategy Officer at [Ontario One Call](https://www.ontarioonecall.ca), the folks behind the free service that helps you find out what's underground *before* you break ground. Jean's got a ton of helpful info about why locates matter, what your responsibilities are as required by Ontario law, and what's being done to make the whole process easier and more reliable.

So whether you're planting a tree, building a retaining wall, putting in a pool or even just expanding an existing garden bed — this one's for you. Go ahead and grab your shovel — but don't put it in the ground until you've heard this episode.

Let's dig in.

Hehe, I know. I couldn't resist. I love a good pun.

Music transition

Interview:

Karina: Welcome to the podcast, Jean. We have a very timely topic today because at this time of year, everyone is eager to get shovels in the ground. And I'm glad you're here to talk about dig safe best practices and what that means for landscapers and even home gardeners.

Jean: It's a pleasure to be here. Thank you, Karina, and thank you to Landscape Ontario for the opportunity to tell our story and to engage with your audience.

Karina: Well, at the end of the day, we want everyone to go home safe. We want the public to be safe and to enjoy all the efforts of landscapers. So we don't want any damages to occur during those times. So I think it's really important that we talk about some of these things so people understand what their responsibilities are.

First, I want to give you a chance to introduce yourself and tell us about your role at Ontario One Call.

Jean: Terrific. Well, thank you again. My name is Jean Lépine, and it's a good French-Canadian name from the Ottawa area. And, my role at Ontario One Call is a fancy title called chief strategy officer. But generally, I'm responsible for our business planning or strategic planning. The way that we report on our success and the initiatives that we undertake on an annual basis, but also for marketing and communications and advertising. And the story, if you will, of safety promotion.

So we are constantly looking for ways to engage audiences, to engage Ontarians, to engage contractors in understanding their responsibilities under an act, because there is an act in Ontario, it's different in Ontario than it is in other provinces in the country. Ontario has an act that promotes safe excavation and that engages contractors and homeowners in an ask to request to locate before they dig. So this is very much unique in the Canadian context. It's not unique across North America, but in Ontario, it's unique in that, before you dig, you must

request to locate. And it's something that we're very proud of. It protects people, it protects infrastructure, it keeps workers safe. And so we continue to try to find ways to break through, you know, in a very crowded media space where everybody's trying to tell their story.

We're always looking for ways to break through. And, and frankly, this is another opportunity for us today talking with you and your audience to get out there and tell the story of click before you dig.

Karina: This is fantastic. A second ago, you mentioned the importance of calling for a locate. So for those who don't know what that is, can you explain it and when and why they need to happen?

Jean: So before you break ground essentially in Ontario, you must call for a locate or must click for a location. Generally 95% of the requests that we receive are done online through our web portal. And essentially for contractors and big and small, there's things underground that they can't see. So what we, what the law requires, but what we encourage people to do is to actually click and submit a request that allows you to say, I intend to dig in this specific area. Please let me know if there's anything below ground that I need to be mindful of. And when you do that, what we do at Ontario One Call is we send a notification to anybody who owns a structure underground in that location to let them know that somebody intends to dig there.

What they will in turn do is send a locator or provide you with clearance that there is, in fact, nothing underground there that they're concerned with. But they may send a locator to mark the ground. And, you know, you've probably seen in your neighbourhood strolls that there's some paint on the ground and, and/or flags and that tells you that there's something underground there and that tells you likely that somebody intends to dig there.

And so with that kind of information joined with some paperwork, you would get some paperwork that kind of lays out what's there. The combination of those two is your ability to dig. So once you've got that information in hand you are then clear to dig. And generally that takes --- it's free, by the way, I should say that very clearly it's free for homeowners. It's free for contractors to reach out to us and to seek a locate. And then along with it comes paperwork. And along with that comes your ability to dig.

Karina: And so this applies to everyone, right? Somebody who's maybe just putting a six-inch spade into the ground, or someone who's bringing in an excavator. Both of those situations require a locate.

Jean: They do. And I know that for some folks listening to the show, they may say, well, wait a second, I'm only going to go a few inches deep. But the truth is that some types of infrastructure are only a few inches below the surface. So I think about telecommunications cables in particular, and some electrical lines as well. So there are some things that are a bit closer to the top of the soil. And there are things that move over time. And you and I spoke about this previously. It's kind of like, well, I've always had a garden here. So like, why would I ask you? What happens is things do move underground over time. And so it's always safer. And it's the law in Ontario to actually click before you dig. So we encourage folks to do that before they engage in projects.

And maybe one other thing I would add, Karina, is that based on the research that we --- so we do awareness research on an annual basis, we reach out to folks, both contractors and homeowners, and ask them if they've had any projects in the last year. And then we ask them, and have you requested a locate? And unfortunately, still today, there's quite a big number of folks — again, I don't want to throw percentages around, but still too many people are digging without locates. And that's of concern to us. So we encourage folks to do that. We encourage them to reach out if they have any questions. They can do so very easily.

Karina: And that's why we're here today, right? To help you boost that awareness. Because if people don't know what they don't know, and if a homeowner or a property owner is aware, then they can ask this of their contractor, or a contractor can advise their homeowner to participate in this. And so the more people who know about it, the better the compliance is going to be.

Jean: Absolutely.

Karina: If somebody is looking at their property and they want to dig somewhere and so they call or they click, they go on the website, they indicate where they want to dig. If they indicate

that it's somewhere in the middle of their property. This isn't a public space, but a private space. Does Ontario One Call and their locators identify anything underground on that private property?

Jean: Either private or public. You must click before you dig. And frankly, as a homeowner, as a parent, as a neighbour, I don't want to do something in my backyard that might affect my neighbour. So if I hit, for example, a telecommunications line and maybe I cut out the Wi-Fi or the internet to my neighbour unknowingly. And of course, I never, never wanted to do that.

But these things do happen and that person works from home. Or you can imagine the difficulty that that can ensue if it takes a few days to fix. I think the beauty of it is that a homeowner can seek a locate for a project that they intend to do, and the timeline is five days. So generally we don't, you know, wake up on a Saturday morning and decide we're going to do a significant project in our yard.

Sometimes it happens, okay. But generally we're kind of like, we plan these things out a little bit and we have to get materials and we have to get, you know, tools and stuff. So when you are in that planning phase, that's the best time to reach out to us, because a locate can last up to 30 or 60 days depending on the infrastructure owner. So, you know, you've got time to execute on this. If you do it right, you know, you pick your spot that you intend to dig in. And, we notify the infrastructure owners, a locate is done or several locates could be done. And then you're free to, you know, free to do your work. And obviously, you'll always dig very carefully anyways, particularly if you're going to go, you know, a few feet down to do something.

But, typically that would happen if you're putting in a fence post or a deck or something like that. I mean, we'd be maybe surprised to hear that some folks are still digging for pools without asking for locates. So that scares us a little bit, because you know, that's an extensive excavation. That is where, as the homeowner, you really need to work with your contractor and make sure that they are doing the right things.

And because there is no cost associated with seeking a locate that shouldn't be the blocker. Right? Because it's not a cost thing. It's more about the time and good planning will manage the time issue.

Karina: Well, the timing doesn't even sound like it's that bad of an issue, because we certainly know that it can take several weeks or months to get permits for certain things. So to get a response within five days and have those elements marked out properly, it actually seems like that's a pretty quick service. All these landscapers know that when they're working on a project that they might be planning it over the winter so that they can be ready to get shovels in the ground when it warms up. So there's plenty of time in a Canadian winter to get some of these things identified as a critical step in the planning.

You mentioned having a neighbourhood, somebody cutting the telecommunications line. And this happened to me where it was municipal work being done on my street, and it was also during Covid. So everyone's working from home. All the children are doing schooling from home. And then for three days we were all off the internet because those lines had been cut. That was a major disruption, so nobody got hurt, but it certainly meant that in a time when life was already in upheaval, to add that loss of normalcy, of being able to connect with the outside world had pretty major impacts.

Jean: I think there's some folks who think, well, you know, you knucklehead, you broke the internet. That's not life threatening, but it is in some ways. It could be if you are hooked up to some apparatus, medically speaking, that requires the internet. So there's always an extension and there's always that thought process that we need to have, you know, as good neighbours and as friends and as folks who care about their communities to think, well, wait, I did that.

So I'll use my own example. Before I joined One Call, I really didn't know One Call, I didn't. And I'm a kid that grew up in the Ottawa area, and I lived in other parts of the world, but I came back to the Toronto area before I joined One Call, I actually worked on a project at my sister's home, and I rented a little excavator, which I had no training to do, but I looked it up on YouTube as some folks in your audience may know. I wanted to try to help, but I wanted to do a good job, and I did my homework, but I still wasn't skilled or trained, etc. and I did end up hooking the electrical line underground that connected the whole building to the garage. And thankfully, I didn't break it, but I hooked it and it made me think, like, wow.

First of all, I could have been very dangerous. I could have zapped myself, but I didn't. I'm glad that I didn't, but it's just like that basic understanding, if I knew, I would have called and I would have been marked and I would have known to stay away from there, but I didn't. And so really, and I say, just with respect to your audience, unless you have some experience with this space, it's kind of like, I didn't know about that, like I didn't know. And that's fair ball. Like, okay, we didn't know. And it's our responsibility as a public safety administrative authority at the province of Ontario who has a mandate to to promote safe excavation, it's our job to try to get out there, engage folks. And I would say with respect to you, Karina and and also to one of your colleagues, Joe Salemi, that we started to engage more recently in this discussion, and you guys have been super open about, hey, let's talk about it. Let's make sure that our folks, let's make sure that our members are engaged and understand. And if there's anything more that we can do as a public safety administrative authority, we're going to do that because you have a large membership that's digging almost daily.

And we want to make sure that people are doing it safely, that it's not affecting their projects. That are they're able to get their projects done and run a good business and, you know, make a few bucks and put bread on the table for their families, etc.. So, like, we're not trying to get in the way of that, but we really want to protect people and protect communities. And, and we'll try to do everything that we can to make that as good as we can.

Karina: I think Joe will agree that Landscape Ontario is really dedicated to helping ensure that this profession and this industry has high standards because our members are doing fantastic work. They're really knowledgeable, they're really talented. They're doing things of an incredibly high caliber and making sure that this is just one element of that can make the difference between a major disruption or smooth sailing. So I really enjoy that we have this partnership happening.

Now, you mentioned a few minutes ago that it's law here in Ontario to have a locate.. Was there something that triggered that, like, was there an incident that made legislation possible for this to be put in place?

Jean: There have been over time, but there was a terrible incident in 2003, at Yonge and Bloor in downtown Toronto where lives were lost, so it was part of a project and an excavator hit a gas

pipeline and it just blew up. And it, you know, it affected lots of other things, obviously, because these pipes underground, they're crossing other things that are going on there, there's sewers, there's all sorts of things. It was a very unfortunate situation, and it reminded people how dangerous that can be.

There are incidents happening in the province on a regular basis, unfortunately. Sometimes it's just a mistake. Sometimes there was a locate requested and there was paperwork and people did the right thing. And, you know, sometimes a mistake is made or worse, said that the information wasn't clear enough. So somebody went kind of just outside the lines or etc.

So like those things can happen. But to the degree that we can limit any really bad situations from happening, that's really what we want to do as an organization is let's reduce the chances, reduce the risk of any accident or a safety issue, if you will, by making sure that people are informed. If people are informed, people are going to do the right things. You know, and they want to protect themselves and their employees and they want to protect the communities in which, you know, where they're trying to do business. I'm sure that contractors would want to protect the folks that they're working for at the same time. So they're not going to be doing something that they know could be putting people into jeopardy.

So, yeah, it was a very terrible situation that we hope never to see again. But, you know, all we can do is control what you can control. What we can control is trying to get the message out, try to engage people in this conversation, and try to get people to click before they dig and then try to, you know, to the degree that you can, you guys train your members quite well so they are informed of certain things that they must do when they're trying to do their work. And if we can augment and we can add, you know, more layers to that, so to speak, then we're all doing a good thing for the communities that we love.

Karina: Absolutely. Obviously, with this incident where downtown Toronto and you mentioned that lives were lost and there is like some major infrastructure damage. What happens to the person who causes that damage? What are the fallouts of something like that? I mean, obviously aside from the human element, what else happens, you know, what are the costs?

Jean: The costs are substantive, right? Because, you know, generally people have a license to operate. And when you make mistakes, particularly when you make a mistake that you could have avoided or that you should --- I don't want to sound preachy right, Karina. You and I talked about this before.

I don't want to sound preachy, but there are certain things that members can do to protect themselves and to protect their license to operate, to reduce their risks and therefore their liability insurance, etc.. But the costs of these incidents can be substantial by tens and hundreds of thousands of dollars, because the assets themselves, if you've dug without a locate and you hit something, it's on you, unfortunately.

And hopefully you don't hurt yourself and hopefully you don't hurt others. The assets are assets. They're not people. So they can be repaired. But gas lines are particularly scary and electrical lines too. You know, so there are varying degrees, but rather than have folks make different calls and say, well, you know, it's a telecom line, so I'm not going to call for that one. We don't suggest that that's the right way to go.

The right way to go is to protect everyone, to protect the assets that are underground and just kind of do the right thing and click before you dig you'll get the information that you need that will keep you out of harm's way and protect your liability insurance and not have you end up with a significant cost to the business because, you know, we're all fighting the tariff discussion right now, and we don't need more complications in our lives. We don't need these, you know, lawsuits, etc., and we don't want anybody to get hurt. And I know that your members feel the same about that.

Karina: Absolutely. So the onus would be on the person doing the digging, not necessarily the property owner.

Jean: If you're a homeowner and you're doing the digging, the onus is on you to request a location. You've got property insurance, etc. so you'll be protected in that way. But I'm not giving legal advice. I'm just saying the person who is doing the digging must seek the locate. So if you've hired a contractor to put up a fence or to build a deck, or to build a pool, etc., they

must submit the locate request. Okay, so that's very clear in the law. It's who's digging that that needs to do it.

Karina: And then if damages occur, property damage occurs, loss of life occurs, loss of the other infrastructure...if you've hit a gas line and disrupted all these other assets, you're on the hook for the cost of repair and rebuilding, and then I'm sure there's probably fines. And, you know, that's aside from the insurance liability. So this could be a devastating split second in time for a business or an individual who could have taken a five day pause for free.

Jean: That's right. In fact, the province has provided us with a tool called the administrative penalty. The tool is a tool that most administrative authorities have, like the TSSA and ESA, and essentially provides us with the ability to issue a \$10,000 fine for somebody who digs without locates. And even in a scenario where they did not break or hurt or anything, under our current legislation and the regulations that support the legislation, if somebody was to identify somebody digging without a locate and they complained to Ontario One Call, we would investigate that.

And if it was found to be true that somebody dug without a locate, then they could be fined up to \$10,000. And so you can imagine a small contractor has five employees all of a sudden gets a \$10,000 fine. And that person, you know, is just running a nice little business, trying to do a good thing, but didn't want to wait the five days, let's call it, that can be a game changer.

That can really hurt you. And frankly, is it worth it, you know, to gain a couple or three days? Because generally, like I said, we're not waking up one morning and building a deck, like we're generally planning those kinds of things. So I just offer it to your members, if there's any clarity that they would like on these rules or kind of where the lines are, so to speak, you can reach out to us at Ontario One Call, we'll walk you through it. We'll make sure that there's clarity. And there are two courses that you can take. One is called *No Risk* and the other one is called *Groundwork*. And those two help you both understand our system --- *Groundwork* does. And then *No Risk* really lays out for you what are your responsibilities under the act. And that's something that we'd love to explore more fully with your members over time.

Karina: That's great to have that resource, and I'll include links to those in the show notes as well. So Ontario One Call, I think you had mentioned to me before that it's not so much as a service provider to more of a regulatory authority. Does this change your mandate and your capabilities of enforcing compliance?

Jean: Yes. So the history of One Call, there was a time in the not too distant past where serious infrastructure owners decided that they would gather together and create a hub called Ontario One Call, which would allow an excavator or a party that wanted to excavate to call one place. But back in the day, everybody called but now it's *click*. You know, 95% of our requests come in through the web portal, but they would contact Ontario One Call and Ontario One Call would then ensure that all the infrastructure owners in that space were notified that somebody intended to dig. That was really the service of Ontario One Call.

But in the last few years, the province felt like it needed to give Ontario One Call tools to enforce the marketplace rules. Right. So you gotta click before you dig. Not just, yeah, it's voluntary. It has never been voluntary since 2012, since the act came in. But just to try to provide Ontario One Call with some tools to really encourage folks to do the right thing, those things start to change in 21, 22, 23 and 24. So over the course of the last few years, we've been given new tools, and over time that turned us into a public safety administrative authority. So we moved from being generally a hub, a service oriented hub, to still doing that work. But now we've got a second part to the business, which is more regulatory compliance and making sure that people do the right things.

So I should add though, Karina, just so it doesn't feel like a bit lopsided on unsafe digging and digging without locates. We also have an administrative penalty for underground infrastructure owners who don't deliver locates on time. So it's a balanced approach. Obviously an excavator can't go do their work unless they have all the locates that they need to do their work. So we are keeping an eye on that. And where there is a complaint on somebody who's not delivering a locate, we do the investigation. And if it comes up that that's not occurred, then they too are issued a fine.

Karina: Okay.

Jean: And they can be issued multiple warrants for days and days and days that they're late. Now, I should say we don't intend to regulate our way to safe excavation. We don't want to be the big, bad police officers of the sector. But our whole mantra is promote safe excavation. Try to encourage the sector to work together and collaborate. And a lot of that goes on. There's always negotiation between excavators and underground infrastructure owners on the timing of things, and we encourage that as long as it's done safely and it's kind of above board and there's paperwork, etc.. So we're always encouraging that collaboration because sometimes the intention is for the project to start next Monday, let's say. But then something happens and the project's not going to happen for two more weeks. So as long as there is engagement and discussion you know things are always going to work out I think quite well. I just didn't want your members to think that it was all one sided. It's not all about unsafe digging or digging without a locate. There are penalties for late locates as well.

Karina: Okay, that's good to know because I wasn't aware of that. But it makes sense that those infrastructure owners, it's in their best interest to protect what they have and mark it so it doesn't get damaged because we know the consequences could be devastating. So this is a legal requirement in Ontario. What about the rest of Canada or throughout North America? What are the standards and expectations more broadly?

Jean: So there's BC One Call. There's an Alberta organization called Utility Safety Partners. There is an organization in Quebec called Info-Excavation. It's the same concept. It's the same you click, you get the information that you need. It's just voluntary. But all of these organizations are principally set up by the underground infrastructure owners. So they're trying to protect their assets, you know, and they engage very I think very proactively with excavators, contractors, etc., to try to engage them in the conversation about protecting their infrastructure and protecting people and communities, etc. So like those things are happening and the same is true in Atlantic Canada.

So this concept is not unique to Ontario. The only thing that's unique to Ontario is that we have it enshrined in an act. The timelines are a bit different. The penalties are somewhat different. It's not all enshrined in law. In some cases it's enshrined in labour laws and in other safety elements. It's not all encapsulated, like, Ontario One Call is a bit unique in that we have it all in one act. We're looking for ways to continue to promote safe excavation across the province.

But if your members have any other ideas, we'd love to hear them. Partnering with organizations like yours is one that we think is going to be good win-win. You know, for your members, but also for the work that we're trying to do.

Karina: So there we have an open call to anyone with great ideas for how to encourage others to embrace these smart, safe practices. With all the variabilities that you just mentioned, you know, there's different fines, there's different days of waiting. Even within Ontario, I imagine there's a lot of variability between the municipalities and how everything is mapped and what services are available there. How does that work for you and trying to make something uniform in practice?

Jean: Mapping is a big piece of work. So if you're an underground infrastructure owner, you generally know where your stuff is. If you're a big organization, I'll just use some of the big ones, say your Enbridge or your Rogers or any of these big organizations that have infrastructure all over the province of Ontario, you know where your stuff is because you have to service it and it's your line to revenue. So you know where your stuff is.

And in the case of some municipalities, not all, some of the bigger municipalities really have, I would say, a very good handle on where their infrastructure is. And, you know, obviously their constituents, their citizens rely on it. So they got to know where it is if they have to repair it or something happens. But there are probably smaller rural municipalities where, you know, there's not always a ton of work every year, so some of the mapping may not be quite up to a certain standard. And that is something that we're thinking about quite a bit, is how do we get the right standards for mapping across the province without --- we don't want to leave anybody behind. But every municipality in the province of Ontario is a signatory to the work of Ontario One Call. Under the act, they're deemed a member of Ontario One Call. Mapping and having accurate mapping is a responsibility. The standards are not super clear. And that's not in our act. And so that is a conversation that we are into right now.

We have an initiative in our strategic plan that takes us from 2025 to 2027 to create a unified mapping strategy for the province of Ontario. You know, you gotta know what's underground to be able to give good guidance, to be in a certain format so that when a contractor, an excavator

or homeowner is going to look at putting a shovel in the ground or any kind of equipment that they actually can trust that the information that they're getting is accurate. Fully understanding what's underground can really help you with planning. You've got a big project. If you know what's underground you can make certain choices in advance rather than discover them on site during the project. Where we could, you know, hopefully make some... I'm trying to not use a pun but make some ground by having a unified mapping strategy for the province so that everybody has clarity on what's underground. It's a lot of work, though.

Karina: I imagine. And so that mapping standard would cover telecommunications, gas, electrical. For those in rural areas who might have septic systems, is this covered under Ontario One Call? And if it's not, how would somebody know how to find that kind of infrastructure under their property?

Jean: So there are locate service providers that operate all over the province. Folks can hire a locate service provider to try to find something that is not on a map. We have the maps that we have access to. And so where an underground infrastructure owner has provided us with the maps for a certain area then we would know if something's there.

But if it's in your private backyard, we may not know what's there. And in those cases, if you're going to do a significant dig, I would say, and you're curious or you're cautious, then you can contact a locate service provider and try to get them to engage in that conversation. It still starts with click before you dig. You're going to do a project in your backyard, you start with us. If you feel like, well, look, I've been given the all clear, there's nothing here, but you still, as an individual, you're like, I'm not sure. I think maybe there is something there, you can go a step further.

Karina: Okay. Let's talk a minute about the people who do perform this service. Whether they're the independent contractor or those who are working for the infrastructure owners, that as a job must feel a little stressful. I mean, they're trying to identify where dangerous elements are underground. And if they get it wrong, how do you think people handle that as a job and knowing that that's kind of a stressful situation to be in?

Jean: I think it's a very, very good question. And, you know, because the two of us are humans, so we care about people and we care about professionals who work in the sector, I think it is a pretty stressful bit of work. And obviously over time, as a professional, you learn things probably year over year and, you know, maybe in five years it's a less stressful job,

I don't know, but I know that, because as an organization, we want to be able to learn and we want to grow, we did go out with a city group who has their own locators. And we went and did, you know, like a ride along for the day. And I did perform a locate, and I could tell you that I was very uncertain. Now, I'm also not trained over the course of weeks, but we did go out in the field and we got some coaching and we got some guidance. And like, these are things you need to think about. These are the things. But I know that I felt like, wow, if I didn't do this right and somebody were to come and dig tomorrow, so to speak...I would feel terrible, like if I didn't do it right. So I think it is a stressful job.

There is training. All locate service providers provide training for those individuals, and they work often in tandem with the underground infrastructure owners themselves. So a gas provider would have training that they would provide to the locate service provider to ensure that they locate their technology or their assets clearly. And the same would be true for others. So it really is very much a collaboration. And there is training. There's an organization called the ORGCA (Ontario regional Common Ground Alliance) that's in the business of advocating for their members, but also providing damage prevention training, which is what it's called --- damage prevention. There is training. There are opportunities for folks to learn how to perform locates, how to perform them adequately.

If it's not covered under our legislation, there's no regulation for locate service providers. So, you know, in some ways that may be something that we need to think through and something that the sector wants to engage in terms of a conversation on how you... we talked about mapping and bringing the standards up on mapping, well maybe we need to do the same for locate service providers and locators as a trade, because this is not something that you just pick up and start doing the next day. You need to be trained. You need to do it right. If there is some stress because you don't want to make mistakes doing that job.

Karina: It's one of those jobs that I think you never really think about somebody having to go out and do them. This is, you know, a profession for somebody, and it requires a certain amount of skill and dedication to getting it right. Now that we've talked all about all the different angles of Ontario One Call and the safe digging practices, if somebody wanted to learn more or to engage with your service or to request locate, what do they need to do? Where do they need to go?

Jean: Well, thank you for the question. Obviously you can come to Ontario One Call's website. If you just Google Ontario One Call it, you're going to get us and then you can go to our website. There's a lot of good information there, both generally and then specifically. And then you can go to our web portal through our website. That's where you can request a locate.

But if you just Google "click before you dig" you're also going to get there. Click before you dig is very much what folks remember. And it's very much what's used, in fact it's used across the country. Like, we don't own that. But if you click before you dig, you're going to end up in a portal that coaches you through essentially how to request to locate.

If we are successful here today, Karina, and kind of building a bridge between what we're trying to do and your membership, we would encourage as many of your members as possible to click before they dig, because if they do that, not only will they be protecting themselves, but they will be protecting the communities in which they operate. And obviously the assets that are underground. But that's a tough job.

You know, we talked about locate service provider, but somebody who on a day to day basis has to dig to do their work, that also is quite scary and could feel unsafe. And so to the degree that we can provide them with any help and the tools to do their jobs right and to do them safely, we're all ears. All the time. And, you know, it's a 24-7 business. You can contact us in an emergency type situation, and we'll respond and we'll make sure that there is locators out through the underground infrastructure owner. They'll make sure that locators go on a site where something's occurred that is either dangerous or life threatening.

Go to our website, go to click before you dig and encourage your friends and family to do the right thing because we need to protect each other and it's free and it's generally pretty fast.

Karina: And it sounds like there's no good reason not to do this. So hopefully all of our listeners today, they take a chance to share this episode with friends and colleagues and clients and anybody who needs to know about this because it affects so many different people at so many different levels, and in any situation where we're putting a shovel or something into the ground.

So, Jean, thank you so much for coming in and giving all this context and the insights around Dig Safe, and I really hope that this makes a big difference, so that we make sure that everyone comes home at the end of the day, safe and sound.

Jean: Thank you very much on behalf of the employees of Ontario One Call, thank you and best wishes to the members of LO.

Music transition

Extro:

Karina: That's a wrap on today's episode. Can you dig it? Huge thanks to Jean Lépine from Ontario One Call for breaking it all down for us.

At the end of the day, whether you're digging a garden bed or trenching for irrigation, taking that extra step to get your locates is just smart business. It keeps your crew safe, your project on schedule and your reputation solid.

Remember, it's free, it's easy, and in Ontario, it's the law — just call or click before you dig. Head to **ontarioonecall.ca** to make a request, or Google to find the locate service provider in your province or territory.

If you found this episode helpful, be sure to share it with your team or anyone else who needs a reminder before breaking ground this season. And don't forget to subscribe so you never miss an episode of the *Landscape Ontario Podcast*. Thanks for listening. Stay safe out there, and keep growing.

Resources relevant to this episode

Ontario One Call: ontarioonecall.ca

Courses:

- Groundwork: ontarioonecall.ca/learning-centre/groundwork
- Know Risk: ontarioonecall.ca/learning-centre/knowrisk

Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance: orcga.com

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