

York adds big hole to pipe woes

Unstable ground makes repair work challenging

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A sink hole in Vaughan has turned into a massive issue that will take another month to repair and required the continued shut down of one of the area's busiest intersections.

The hole first ruptured Feb. 7 at Jane St. and Highway 7 and initial thinking was that it would take only a few days to fix.

"But when we got in there we found we had huge issues," said Bruce Macgregor, York Region Commissioner of Transportation and Works who now adds the Big Hole to his agenda which already includes the region's controversial Big Pipe project.

The more crews dug, the more ground water they encountered, he said, and the ground was unstable and unsafe to continue.

City of Vaughan emergency contractor, Clearway Construction, is now drilling holes to drain the water in an effort to get at the sewer and water main which have both ruptured and were part of the reason for the sinkhole's appearance.

"What we think — and we won't know until we really get in there — is that the sewer line was jacked through a liner plate casing and may not have been grouted properly when it was done 20 years ago," Macgregor said.

"That's what we suspect and we don't really know yet. But over the years we think that's allowed finings and material to wash through and erode the backfill

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No quick fix for sinkhole

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and then caused the ground to shift and move the sewer pipe which broke and just added more water to wash away more materials."

Finally, he said, more ground shifted and the watermain also ruptured, bringing in more water and the inevitable sinkhole.

Macgregor said plans now are to drain the groundwater and then assess what needs to be done from an open cut since tunneling is not feasible.

As a result, the intersection will remain

closed until about March 20 with detours around the intersection.

Vaughan survey crews suggest the local sanitary sewer has dropped as much as 1.3 metres. Sewage is currently being re-directed away from the affected area and water has been shut off. A temporary water supply has been supplied to businesses on the northwest corner of the intersection.

Work continues around the clock, he said adding that the soil in the area is also problematic.



WILLIAM CONWAY/PROGRESS PHOTOGRAPHY

Work continues around the clock to repair a washed out sewer and watermain at the corner of Jane Street and Highway 7. Crews are draining the groundwater to assess what needs to be done from an open cut since tunneling is not feasible.