



# OTTAWA CITIZEN



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Work crews begin the installation of replacement pipe sections under the eastbound Highway 174 near the Jeanne d'Arc exit. This was the site of last week's sinkhole which swallowed a commuter's car.

Photograph by: Pat McGrath , Ottawa Citizen

OTTAWA — A week after a sewer pipe collapsed and opened a sinkhole along Highway 174 that swallowed a car, questions remain about how the imminent failure went undetected.

Although the city knew the massive 3.6-metre diameter corrugated steel pipe needed a renewal, staff didn't think it needed immediate attention.

Even on the day it failed, according to city staff, people were removing debris from the pipe, preparing it to be re-lined, and apparently didn't see any suggestion of a serious problem.

"This has been confirmed by the contractor," they reiterated in an email this week.

So how was the potential for collapse overlooked?

"Sometimes, despite our best efforts, deterioration can happen where we can't see it," said Ted Sherwood, an assistant professor of structural engineering at Carleton University. He pointed to the Laval overpass that collapsed in 2006, killing five people.