

Man who escaped Hwy. 174 sinkhole wants OPP to investigate

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Posted: Oct 29, 2012 5:04 PM ET

Last Updated: Oct 29, 2012 8:03 PM ET

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The man who two months ago had to crawl out of his car after it fell into a sinkhole on Highway 174 said he wants the OPP to investigate whether the city was criminally negligent in failing to prevent the road collapse.

Juan Pedro Unger was travelling eastbound on the highway near the Jeanne d'Arc off ramp on Sept. 4 when the sinkhole formed and swallowed his car.

A collapsed storm sewer pipe under the highway led to the formation of the sinkhole and took more



than a week to repair.

This sinkhole swallowed Juan Pedro's four-door sedan as he drove home during afternoon rush hour on Sept. 4. (Photo courtesy of Ottawa Fire Services)

A video CBC News obtained through access to information requests showed that a routine inspection of the storm sewer a year earlier showed the steel pipe was severely corroded.

The video shows the robot struggling over large rocks as it enters the culvert. Then, at the 36-metre mark, calculated by CBC to be directly under the Jeanne d'Arc exit, the robot stops to inspect two large holes, first on the left side of the pipe, where the steel has completely corroded away, then a couple metres farther on the right, where there's a huge gap in the pipe, behind which an alcove of wet clay is clearly visible.

'There should be consequences' says Unger

Unger said he was horrified after watching the video and thinks there should be a criminal investigation. Unger says the OPP should investigate rather than Ottawa police to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

"I think there should be consequences for this incredible negligence. I think it's criminal negligence. I would like to see the OPP press charges for public endangerment," said Unger.

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Juan Unger said he believes the city should be investigated after it failed to repair a storm sewer before it collapsed earlier this year. (CBC)

After Unger's car fell into the sinkhole, he managed to get his door open and crawled out, using the door to prop himself up. He climbed through the hole with the aid of two witnesses who stopped at the scene.

City Councillor Marianne Wilkinson said since the sinkhole incident, the city decided to fast track the repair of two other storm sewer pipes under Highway 174.

In a statement to CBC last week, city manager Kent Kirkpatrick wrote "The assessment provided no indication that would lead to a conclusion that failure of the culvert was imminent."

City councillor Tim Tierney said the inspection video raises serious questions and concerns, but said he's reserving judgment until he sees the results of an independent investigation expected in December.



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