

Ottawa Sinkhole: Smell of paving tar fills air at Rideau and Sussex



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Paving commences on the sinkhole at Rideau and Sussex Saturday, June 25 Ashley Fraser / Postmedia

The pungent, yet welcome scent of hot paving tar greeted pedestrians on Rideau Street near Sussex Avenue Saturday as work crews move to the final stage of repair of the dramatic sinkhole that struck June 8.

Crews have been determinedly working around the clock infilling the gaping pit, as well as pumping out water from an LRT tunnel below the hole.

Despite the encouraging signs on Saturday of paving trucks and rollers, it's still not 100-per-cent certain the stretch will be open when U.S. President Barack Obama and Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto arrive in town for the annual Three Amigos summit with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in mid-week.



Crews lay down fresh tar over the sinkhole on Rideau near Sussex on Saturday. Ashley Fraser / Postmedia

Mayor Jim Watson made a quick visit to the site and said safety remains paramount.

“Our first priority is to get the final paving done. That should be done by Sunday, and my hope is once we get an engineer’s letter from the Rideau Transit Group we can open it up to cyclists and pedestrians as a first priority,” Watson told Radio-Canada.

“If we’re not able to get it open to automobiles on Monday, and buses, my sense is staff will recommend we put that off until after July 1.”

Work crews have repaired the damaged infrastructure and service has been restored to all affected businesses.

Steve Cripps, head of the city’s light rail implementation office had guesstimated reconstruction could be complete early next week.

But the intersection can’t reopen until engineers have inspected it and given their sign-off, he added.

“Our target is to open it as soon as we can, but of course safety is our priority,” Cripps said.

The city’s initial estimate for reopening the roads was one to two weeks.