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16th Avenue sinkhole costs \$250,000 to fix

BY CHRISSIE O'BRIEN
 Special

Traffic is being diverted around 16th Avenue between McCowan and Kennedy Roads all this week while the region spends \$250,000 repairing a 20-metre hole in the east-bound lanes of the four-lane route.

"This is not a disaster or an emergency in that kind of terminology — we are dealing with the fact of a lot of traffic on 16th Avenue and so we have to clean up the problem," said Brian Harrison, director of roads and transportation for York Region.

The problem stems from a peat bog that was built on because it was deemed too expensive to dig out. When the road was widened in the early 1990s pressure on the peat increased, and as the bog decomposed the road sank.

To remove the peat, the region — which opted to do the repairs now when it believed many people would be away on vacation — has dug a hole more than 100 metres long and four metres deep.

Gary Slayer, supervisor for the York Region road maintenance department, says crews are hopeful the westbound lanes won't be affected by repair work.

Operations technician Melissa Yuricek says the intent is to remove all the material until workers hit solid ground. That will provide a base to rebuild the road.

A major concern during the reconstruction is a sewer and watermain system running beneath the road.


"There's a 24-inch watermain underneath the peat bed and if it sinks any more the watermain could break and wash out the surrounding areas," Mr. Slayer said.

Work is expected to be finished by Sunday.

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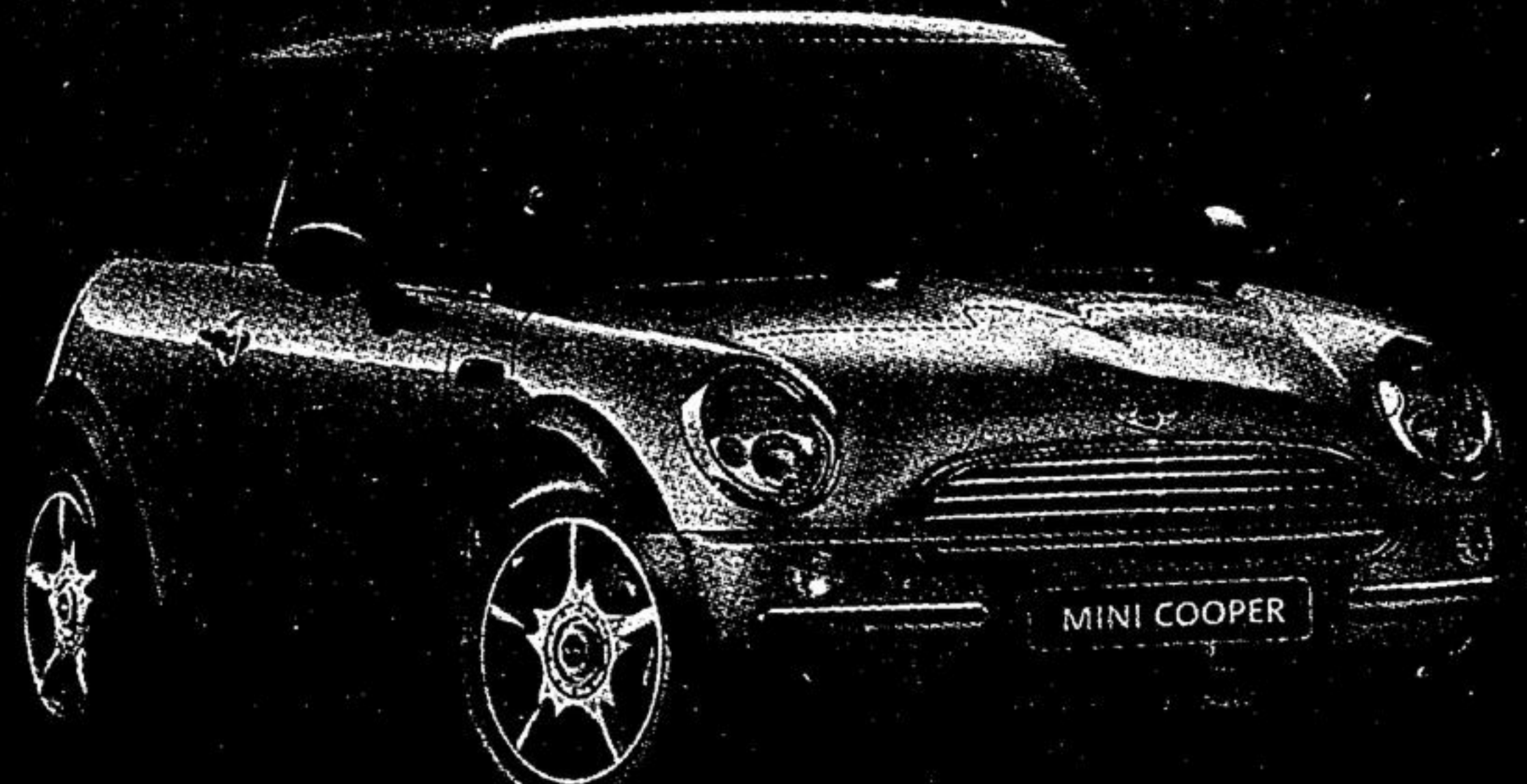
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