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City sets a record for date with a high of 26.7C

"Hot" was the word of the day yesterday as southern Quebec set a number of record high temperatures. In Montreal, the mercury rose to 26.7C, smashing the pre-

Potholes are as Québécois as poutine

In Quebec, all roads lead to ruin.

Our province's road system is crumbling beneath our wheels and downtown Montreal streets have enough holes, heaves, bumps, bounces and craters to make you seasick. They should post warnings that say "CAUTION: THIS STREET MAY CAUSE NAUSEA."

We've always had world-class potholes, but this year they seem to be joining up in an ever-widening crevice crisis. Our city's whole foundation may suddenly collapse and swallow Place Ville Marie - creating "one island, one pothole."

In the past two weeks both the city and province have openly admitted our roads are coming apart at the seams - and they've promised to throw pots of money down our potholes. Quebec just pledged to spend about \$1 billion a year over the next 10 years, though highway experts claim that's only half of what's needed to catch up with Ontario and the States.

Montreal will spend an additional \$44 million, but it also says we need twice that per year to do things right. We seem to have the worst roads on the continent (north of the Rio Grande), with one in every three kilometres in ruins, according to government figures, and the rest simply a wreck. Why?

Some blame Montreal's problems on previous mayor Pierre



JOSH FREED

OPINION ON OUR BAD ROADS

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Bette Midler." Or Universal studios. Or the Colombian drug cartel.

The adopting parties pay for crews to clean up "their" road, or maybe Ms. Midler just goes out and cleans it between films.

Either way, the plan has created a new civic pride in U.S. highways.

Why not try an adopt-a-pothole plan here? Under this scheme, every Quebec pothole would become someone's responsibility, in exchange for a small public thank-you sign like: "You are now approaching Céline Dion's pothole."

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Bourque and his desire for direct contact with China. Others claim the province's construction mafia waters down our asphalt, like cheap beer. Many argue the problems date right back to our road-building days, when contractors saved money by using cheaper materials, like mud instead of cement.

There's also the usual excuse about our province's harsh weather. Apparently, our freeze-and-thaw climate stops precisely at the U.S. border, where Quebec's crumbling asphalt meets Vermont's gleaming blacktop. Whatever the cause, we need a solution, and I've got some to suggest:

Solution 1: Let's appoint a Royal Commission on Potholes to look into their route causes. Is there something wrong with our pothole-filling methods compared with other northern countries? Does Finland fill its holes with a newer technological material – like cell phones? Does Sweden fill its with IKEA furniture?

Maybe we could find a miracle material of our own that's gooey, dense and indestructible. I was thinking of maple syrup, or pou-tine.

Solution 2: Let's privatize our potholes. Many U.S. roads were covered in litter until they introduced "adopt-a-highway" programs that encouraged the rich to look after them. Today, many highways are super clean and lined with signs that say things like: "This road is adopted by

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The pothole's new parent could do whatever they wanted to keep their hole attractively maintained. They could fill it with gravel, or grass, or flowers, or stained glass. If the hole got really big, they could turn it into something special – like a swimming pool, or a lake, or an orchestral pit for outdoor spring concerts.

Businesses might sponsor potholes too, such as the Whole Earth Catalogue, or a potted plant company. The committee for legalizing marijuana would jump at the chance to fill Quebec with *potholes*.

And how about political sponsorships by the federal government, experts at dropping money down a hole? Ottawa is only putting \$70 million into Quebec roads this year, but maybe they'd boost it to a billion if we set up a secret sponsorship fund.

That way, they could repave Quebec's craters and cover them all with Canadian flags. We'd save Canada by putting "a maple leaf in every pothole."

Quebec could fight back by paving over highway holes with the fleur-de-lis. I'm sure there'd be interest at all levels of government. After all, the French word for bribe is a pot de vin.

Solution 3: If we have to spend \$10 billion on roads in the next decade, why don't we at least get the job right? Instead of patching up our roads with endless annual Band-Aids, and Festivals of Road Repair, maybe we should rebuild them properly.

Let's evacuate the city for a year and move everyone south to the Turks and Caicos islands, while they redo our streets from scratch. We'd come back when the job was finished and our new roads were ready. In our absence, we'd put up the ultimate Montreal sign:

"Detour. City closed for construction."

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