

Road repair a hot topic in Tache

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A mere \$7,000 in road repairs does not go far enough according to Tache residents.

The neighbourhood of Landry Road, Lark Lane and Municipal Road 53N have been complaining about the state of 53N for years. Twenty-six of them showed up to the RM of Tache council meeting on July 9 to make their case heard.

Council voted to fund an extra \$7,125 in pothole filling, even though they acknowledged it is a short-term fix.



ALEX LAMBERT THE CARILLON The 26 member delegation led by resident Pat St. Hilaire watch over council on July 9.

The RM said more potholes will likely form around the existing potholes once the harsh Manitoba winters have time to set in.

"This is good for this year, but we really need to look for long-term solutions," said Ward 4 Coun. Steven Stein.

Four quotes from private companies for the repair ranged from \$7,125 to \$344,500, although the larger number is for a full rework.

Between 2016 and 2018, \$71,082 was spent on seal coating 53N. Since then, the RM has spent nothing, according to a report by Tache Finance Officer Cheryl Harder.

Neighbourhood residents showed up just before 10 a.m. to fight for their road. The delegation was scheduled for the morning with a decision by council in the afternoon. Delegation members asked for the decision to be pushed forward, as no other presentations were scheduled for the day, and some residents were taking time off work.

Council was split evenly on whether or not to keep to the agenda. In the case of a tie vote, resolutions fail to pass.

"From my consultation with the assistant CAO and the CAO, the delegation was put at (10 a.m.) to accommodate those that would be here," said Mayor Armand Poirier. "Then the rest of the (items) on the agenda were put in another order but not specific to how the discussion would go or how our timeframe would work."

Poirier voted to move up the meeting to directly following the hearing, along with Coun. Steven Bowker (Ward 1), Colleen Jolicoeur (Ward 4) and Dawn Braden (Ward 3) who is the representative for the area in question.

The 26 neighbours didn't like the decision, with organizer Pat St. Hilaire disagreeing with council's vote to keep the schedule when some members would have to leave.

"We appreciate your consideration and request this matter be voted on today while we're in attendance, we were hoping that this agenda item would be moved back up so that most of us would stay around because we want transparency," St. Hilaire said after council's decision on leaving the agenda as is.

"The issue of the poor condition of our road and the debate about what to do about it has been ongoing and unresolved for many years," said St. Hilaire. "My husband

and I first started communicating with the RM about this in 2018, however here we are again."

St. Hilaire has lived in the neighbourhood with her husband for 34 years, with the road being paved around 1993.

"As time passes this keeps getting put on the back burner and keeps having to be revisited. We are just asking that we be treated fairly and justly and that our road be properly fixed to its original state and maintained to preserve it."

"We really sincerely hope the RM will give serious consideration to our plea and do us right by making the decision today to restore Mun 53N, we have all paid our fair share to the municipality through our taxes and have seen nothing in return."



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Since last seal coating the road in 2018, the municipality has only put buckets of gravel to fill potholes, but it isn't enough.

"Any kind of maintenance that is done on this road, primarily buckets of gravel, is not even timely at this point, those holes are huge, you have to jog around to get around them. Then gravel goes in, within a matter of a couple days the gravel's out and the potholes are deteriorated even more so, and if it rains you can't even really tell how deep that pothole is. And people have literally stopped when going through those potholes to see if their car's OK."



ALEX LAMBERT THE CARILLON Pat St. Hilaire speaks to councillors on the impacts the road as had had on her neighbourhood.

"Right now, all people see when they enter off the highway is how bad and unsafe it is, and even have to drop their vehicle from one side to the other," said St. Hilaire. "Wouldn't it be better if people had a positive perception of our RM, one that takes care of its municipality and puts residents' tax dollars to good use when it's so obviously needed?"

"When people drive onto our road they go 'whoa, like who wants to live here?'"

According to residents, one of the biggest reasons the road is in such bad shape is the semi trucks that use it as an access road to get from Provincial Road 207 to Dawson Road and Poirier Road.

The road has a sign telling truckers not to use 53N, but some truck drivers do anyway, saying they didn't see the sign until it was too late.

53N, which lies northwest of Lorette was paved and maintained with a reserve fund, which ran out in 2018, with an expectation for the RM to take over the costs of maintenance. But the buckets of gravel used by Tache haven't been enough to keep the seal-coated road in shape.

"We moved here almost 14 years ago, and one of the selling features for us was that it's (paved), not gravel," said resident Kathy Kyryluk. "I understand that people in the community around us that have gravel want paved roads, not the other way around."

"I find it hard to believe we're actually here having this conversation, that we're going to tear up a paved road to put in a gravel road makes absolutely zero sense to me," she said. "You've got million-dollar homes on that street, and you want to put a gravel road in, you've just deteriorated the value."

One resident with children said she's scared for her children playing on the street.



ALEX LAMBERT THE CARILLON A Municipal Road 53N resident drives around the potholes scattered across the 750 metre long street.

"It seems like these potholes aren't being filled on a regular basis, and our kids can't rollerblade, we can't take our dog or our kids for a walk because the cars are dodging these potholes and someone's going to get hit by a car," said Natasha Breen. "What is it going to take? Someone to get hit by a car, a kid get hit by a car, someone to die on this road before someone's willing to fix this damn road, these potholes are terrible."

Overall, residents said they weren't happy with council's decision on the short-term fix. Pointing across the Trans-Canada Highway to the Centre of Canada Park, which was paid for by the RM.

One resident said he was disappointed that Tache will pay for a park for tourists, and still won't keep his street in shape.

Poirier said the RM will try to get a sign on Highway 207 telling trucks they can't turn onto 53N as some residents said the current sign isn't easy to spot, and some truckers don't see it until it's too late.

Council voted 5-3 in favour of the \$7,125 quote for SM Ventures Inc.