



Why line paint just won't stick to Newfoundland streets



Every spring it's the same old thing: disappearing lane white and yellow dividers

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It's a rite of spring - replacing the yellow lane markings that have disappeared over the previous months.
(Gary Locke/CBC)

On one of my first drives through Corner Brook, the cops pulled me over.

I'd just blown straight through an intersection, and had in fact been in a left-hand turning lane the whole time.

Uh ... what lane?

Burden agreed, saying most paint-alternative products work just fine in warmer climates, but thermoplastics' success often requires optimal asphalt, which, as anyone who has ever driven anywhere in the province can tell you, is not something you see a lot of in Newfoundland and Labrador.



Just one shining example of Newfoundland's wonderful asphalt. (CBC)

Don't give up ... just yet

While anyone can — and does — complain about our terrible asphalt, Kamal Hossain is actually trying to do something about it. The associate professor of engineering at Memorial University in St. John's specializes in pavement performance and sustainability, and has begun researching those issues and others in a Newfoundland context.

Even he says the line painting issue is a tough one to solve.

"We have a really extreme climate in Newfoundland," he said.





May 24, 2018: Newfoundland, where extreme weather is gnome big deal. (Submitted by Beverly Young)

Noting our roads face far less traffic than much of the continent, Hossain places much of the pavement-and-paint problem on the staggering amount of moisture and precipitation the island endures year-round.

"Water is the enemy for asphalt pavement, because the hydrogen atom alters the binding capacity of asphalt ... water has also a damaging effect on paint," he said, adding he thought the province and the City of St. John's are using state-of-the-art technology for its painting at the moment.

Hossain recommends more studying of the issue within the province, particularly scrutinizing the accepted construction specifications, durability issues and asphalt mixtures.

He's not the first to question the pavement status quo — Newfoundland and Labrador's auditor general [slammed the way the province managed its pavement](#) in 2017, and the Department of Transportation and Works is now in the midst of a trial of new asphalt mixtures.

- [N.L. government tests new asphalt formulas](#)

Amid all this, Hossain is confident the solution is out there.

"That's how science, technology and engineering work," he said. "If there's a problem, and we know the problem, we work and try to solve the problem."