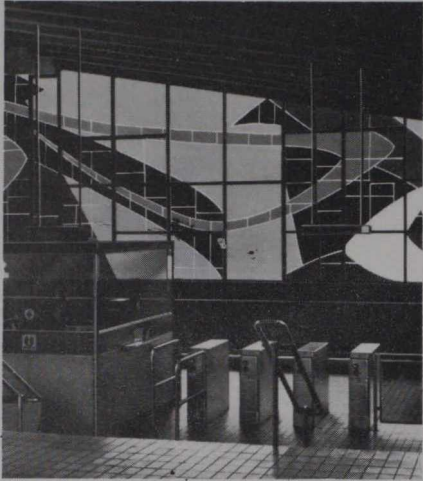


Cover picture shows

A modernistic mural covers a wall in the Champ de Mars station of the Montreal Metro.

Canada Today



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Urban living:

Canadian cities go underground

By Simon Jenkins* of *The Evening Standard*

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A train travels through an open-cut section of the Toronto subway system.

If the 1960s were the decade of the urban motorway in most Canadian cities, there is no doubt that the 1970s will be the decade of the underground train. In Toronto, in Montreal, in Vancouver, everywhere, the motor-car "freeways" have been one of the great non-solutions to the problem of moving large numbers of people round cities, and particularly to their place of work. However great or small the investment in road space, the cry of the city driver the world over remains the same: "God, the traffic's hell."

Canadian cities are also faced with an additional pressure. The commercial "boosterism" of the past ten years has led

to the construction of massively dense downtown office centres, employing large numbers of people – most of whom own cars. Faced with the awesome alternatives of the collapse of the downtown centres or total traffic strangulation, the authorities have simply had to look seriously at public transport. From being the slightly tatty historic monuments of the European cities "back home", underground trains have suddenly become the futurist symbols of civic pride.

Montreal was first in the field with an impressive network developed in the early sixties and expanded to cater for the Expo celebrations in 1967. Sixteen miles of subway tracks were completed, paid for totally by the city taxpayers.

The trains run French-style on rubber wheels and they link the suburbs directly

*Simon Jenkins recently travelled across Canada examining the urban environment.