

# Canada's electric opportunity to be a global climate leader

By Daniel Breton, Patrick Bateman & Robert Hornung | Opinion | April 26th 2021



Canada has the opportunity to be a global leader in powering electric vehicles with Canada's abundant renewable energy resources. Photo by CanREA

Canada is currently facing two global crises, and only one is showing signs of winding down.

While [COVID-19](#) continues to have negative and unprecedented effects on our health and our economy, new vaccines represent a welcome light at the end of the tunnel.

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[Climate change](#) also continues to damage our health and our economy, along with our ecosystems, and the worst is still to come.

Recently, the situation actually worsened, despite the lockdown in many parts of the country. [New data from the International Energy Agency](#) shows that in December 2020, energy-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions were actually two per cent higher than the year before the COVID crisis.

No vaccine can put an end to the climate crisis, but one solution where Canada has the opportunity to be a global leader is in powering [electric vehicles](#) with Canada's abundant renewable energy resources.

On April 22, the government of Canada [announced](#) a new GHG reduction target to surpass its [Paris Accord](#) target for 2030 and put it on the path to achieving net-zero GHG emissions by 2050.

## But how will we get there?

After all, Canada's GHG emissions have essentially remained the same between 2005 and 2019. While GHG [emissions](#) from the transport sector [increased by 16 per cent during that period](#), GHG emissions from the electricity sector decreased [by 48 per cent](#). Canada is the number 1 country in the world for GHG [emissions per kilometre](#) driven – a dubious achievement reflecting its inefficient light-duty vehicle fleet.

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The solution is plain: Electric vehicles powered by renewable energy represent a tremendous GHG reduction opportunity for Canada, one that will also generate significant benefits for our health, economy and environment.

It will save thousands of lives and billions of dollars every year due to the significant reduction in air pollution that will result. Transportation currently produces 33 per cent of Canada's carbon monoxide emissions and 41 per cent of our nitrogen oxide emissions, key components of the air pollution that causes [15,300 deaths per year and \\$120 billion in economic health impacts](#), according to a [2021 Health Canada report](#).

The transition to non-emitting power and electric vehicles will also bring significant economic benefits to Canadians. Clean Energy Canada estimates there will be [559,400 clean-energy jobs](#) by 2030, two-thirds of them in clean transportation, clean energy, clean grid and storage. These are high-quality, well-paid, sustainable jobs for Canadians.

What's more, according to [Electric Mobility Canada](#), a strong federal strategy for zero-emission vehicles (ZEV), inspired by similar programs in B.C., Quebec or California, [could generate up to \\$200 billion between 2021 and 2030 in sales revenue](#) alone. Consumers will also benefit financially by transitioning to EVs, thanks to their lower lifetime costs of ownership than conventional vehicles.

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To capture all these benefits, Canada must focus on two key areas: expanding the production of decarbonized electricity, and accelerating the adoption of zero-emission vehicles.

Canada has [committed](#) to making 90 per cent of the nation's electricity non-emitting by 2030, and to achieving a non-emitting electricity grid before 2050.

We can meet our targets, relying primarily on Canada's massive tapped and untapped renewable-energy resources, like hydro, wind and solar.

These resources will allow us to fully decarbonize Canada's electricity grid, supplying more than enough clean power for a Canadian new wave of non-emitting electric vehicles.

How can Canada accelerate the adoption of zero-emission vehicles? To reach Canada's own ZEV adoption targets, we need a Canadian electric mobility strategy that includes a ZEV supply chain, more charging infrastructure, ZEV rebates (until there is price parity), education and training, and, finally, ZEV regulation, since voluntary measures alone won't be enough.

That's why Electric Mobility Canada supports Canada's commitment to adopt the most stringent performance standard regulations in North America post-2025 by [adopting](#) California's [LDV](#) and [HDV](#) regulations for fuel economy and ZEV standards.

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With the appropriate policy and regulatory environment, investment will rapidly shift from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy resources.

Low-carbon transportation and zero-emission vehicles are part of “[building back better](#)” and support the new Roadmap for a Renewed U.S.-Canada Partnership.

Canada can and must capitalize on its natural advantages, invest in its homegrown industries and create the regulatory environment needed to become a global leader in electrified transportation powered by renewable electricity.

*Electric Mobility Canada, WaterPower Canada and the Canadian Renewable Energy Association are working together to help build a healthy economic and environmental future for all Canadians.*

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