

Car charging plan unveiled

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Driving into the parking lot at Devonshire Mall to charge up your electric car could soon become a reality under an Ontario government plan to spend \$80 million to help build electric vehicle charging stations across the province.

"We want to make it convenient and realistic and possible for families to consider an electric car as a real and viable option," said Premier Dalton McGuinty as he outlined details of the plan in Markham on Tuesday. The province will provide seed money to proposals to install and test electric vehicle charging stations from the public and private sector.

According to McGuinty, an electric vehicle is a cost-effective alternative to gas-powered cars.

"Investing in charging stations to help Ontarians choose electric and save money; \$70 for gas fill-up; \$7 for electricity," the premier tweeted following the announcement.

Ontario's plan to spur the prevalence of electric car charging stations would be a boost to the electric vehicle industry as well as the Windsor area's fledgling green sector, industry spokesmen said.

"We would love to get involved in providing solar powered car ports with charging stations in every main parking area," said Klaus Dohring, president of Green Sun Rising Inc. "In a few years, we'll have thousands of electric vehicles," said Dohring, whose Kildare Road company manufactures solar powered car ports housing charging stations. "When you consider how many parking lots we have, it will be much easier to charge the vehicle where the vehicle is parked during the day."

The latest incentive offered by the province would have a "significant impact" on an industry which currently employs about 1,200 in the region, added Dohring.

"Ten years ago in Germany, there was hardly any solar industry," he said. "Today, the solar industry in Germany employs about 200,000 people."

Renewable energy as an industry can become larger than the global automotive industry, he added. "It is clear that our transportation sector is moving toward electrification. It is smart to embrace clean transportation and develop the infrastructure for that."

Ontario already offers consumers incentives ranging from \$5,000 to \$8,000 to purchase electric cars.

Virtually every major automaker is in the process of launching plug-in electric or hybrid vehicles. Chrysler Group, for example, plans to introduce an electric Fiat 500 late next year.

"Electrification is just one technology that will help Chrysler Group contribute to meeting the new fuel economy standards as well as lower our carbon footprint," said LouAnn Gosselin, spokeswoman for Chrysler Canada. "Market acceptance of electric vehicles and bringing the cost of electrification to an acceptable level to the consumer will be key."

Lawrence Musyj, director of conservation and energy management at Enwin Utilities, said the announcement could prompt municipalities as well as retailers and other private employers to begin installing charging stations on their properties.

"This announcement is great as far as indicating to the public that electric vehicles are coming and that it's time to start considering getting infrastructure," said Musyj. He said it won't be long before electric vehicles, such as General Motors' Chevy Volt, will cross the border.

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