

Transportation

Building capacity to accelerate the electric school bus transition

Electrifying Canadian school bus fleets is imperative for the climate and the health of local communities. Retiring diesel buses in favour of electric counterparts improves air quality for our children, makes progress on the emissions reductions needed to reach Canada's 2030 goals, and provides long-term operational cost savings to fleets. Several public funding mechanisms^{94,95,96} have helped subsidize electrification for school districts and private fleet operators. However, while purchase incentives play a key role in enabling fleet electrification, they are only one component. Public

and private sector fleet managers and operators also need to be equipped with the capacity and training to manage new electric vehicles, install charging infrastructure and undertake any necessary electrical service upgrades. Undertaking feasibility studies, navigating infrastructure barriers and clarifying fleet requirements can present barriers to adoption. Some fleets are eligible for provincial rebates to conduct infrastructure assessments, and federal funding is available for feasibility studies and modelling,⁹⁷ but not all fleet managers and operators know where to start with an assessment. Canada needs to support additional programs that build the confidence of school bus fleet owners and managers to jump into the zero-emission transition.

New federal funding would help accelerate adoption, build operator confidence, and ensure successful long-term management of electric school buses. Investment in education and capacity-building is a necessary complement to incentives in the net-zero puzzle. Without it, Canada's zero-emission mobility transition will be slower to take off.

Recommended Investment:
\$4 million through NRCan,
accessible to both public sector and non-governmental organizations, to support capacity building, education and awareness activities that accelerate the electrification of school bus fleets.

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Photo: Kentaro Toma

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96 Jasmin Legatos, "Quebec unveils funding to electrify 65 per cent of all school buses by 2030." <https://electricautonomy.ca/2021/04/28/quebec-electric-school-buses-2030/>

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