



Physician loses patience with high price of gas, adopts ZEV technology

A physician's prescription

We all have a part to play in reducing health care's massive ecological footprint.

Dr. Pascal Gellrich

Dr. Pascal Gellrich is a physician based in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia where his work in emergency medicine, offshore telemedicine, and addiction medicine frequently finds him commuting hundreds of kilometers each week between his home and Halifax, Digby and Bridgewater. With monthly gasoline charges topping \$500, and the lease on his gasoline-powered midsize Subaru crossover about to expire, he felt the time was right to reinvigorate his search for a new, more energy-efficient vehicle.

Some months earlier, he had tested a smaller Japanese zero-emission (electric) vehicle (ZEV) but was not impressed with the limited range it offered. A few chance hours to spare while in Dartmouth one afternoon led to a trip to a local General Motors dealership where he tested a Chevrolet Bolt and the rest, as they say, is history.

"I was very impressed with the Bolt," says Gellrich. "It had great range, very pleasing styling, and plenty of space for our family, but I just wasn't ready to jump into the ZEV market at the new Bolt price point."

Once Gellrich realized that generous rebates on new ZEVs in Quebec also resulted in considerable cost offsets for the used market, he was quick to

investigate online offerings and found the Bolt he wanted in Montréal. Following a short call to the vendor, Gellrich arranged to pick up their used Bolt while summer vacationing with his family in the Laurentians a few weeks later.

"The road trip back to Nova Scotia was certainly an interesting one, enjoying a whisper-quiet ride and awesome acceleration, with range anxiety quietly lurking in the background," claimed Gellrich.

Gellrich's move to a ZEV has brought his \$500 a month fuel bills down to about \$60, making a "pretty solid economic argument for electric," he says. "And it is a fun car to drive."

The dashboard interface, which monitors all of the vehicle's onboard systems, provides a tremendous amount of information and also helps to improve driving efficiency.

"Energy consumption aside," says Gellrich, "we are saving money, and lowering our carbon footprint—win-win."

Because of the battery-based propulsion technology and regenerative braking, "routine maintenance on the ZEV is minimal. Aside from changing tires and the cabin air filter, there has been little else to worry about."

According to Gellrich, once you spend a few weeks with a ZEV, your sense of range



anxiety dissipates, finding charging stations on longer trips becomes second nature (most charging happens while parked at home), and your daily routine gets pretty much back to normal, except for the fun you are having driving your ZEV.

More and more charging stations are springing up throughout communities such as at municipal parking locations, airports, hotels and occasionally health facilities. But Gellrich believes the health services sector must do more to help accelerate the adoption of electric vehicle technology. He feels that just the mere presence of ZEV charging stations in hospital locations can help raise awareness in the minds of the general public and sway public opinion in favour of electric over gasoline-powered vehicles. “People see the chargers, they get curious, and hopefully they get engaged,” he says.

“Many hospitals in this country are in the dark ages when it comes to adoption of ZEV technologies. Changing the mindset in the health care community will take time but at the end of the day, it just makes sense. All of us in health care have a responsibility to engage senior leaders, and our friends and colleagues in the conversation and urge the opening of minds.”

He encourages his health care colleagues to step out of their conventional gasoline-fueled comfort zone and investigate ZEV. The market is changing quickly. Traditional auto manufacturers are introducing new vehicle models – some at multiple price points, new manufacturers are entering the market, and new technologies are extending range and improving battery efficiency.

Gellrich’s parting advice, “Worry less about range anxiety and more about finding a fun electric vehicle that suits your lifestyle and driving habits. They make financial sense for a wide range of people. Jump in!”

Health care and the environment are inextricably linked and the health sector has immense potential to influence the future of sustainable transportation in Canada.

It is time to put new meaning to the words *primum non nocere* – first, do no harm.

Health care and the environment are inextricably linked and the health sector has immense potential to influence the future of Canada’s sustainable transportation landscape.



Fueling a ZEV is child’s play. Dr. Gellrich’s six year old plugging in at the Halifax airport.

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