



Paul Lefebvre inspects one of the electric cars at the Zenn plant in St. Jerome, Que. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Ryan Remiorz

## Electric cars allowed on some Quebec roads with speed limits under 50 km/h

13 hours ago

ST-JEROME, Que. — They're arriving in a trickle, not a flood, but low-speed electric cars are allowed on some Quebec roads as of Thursday.

It's part of a pilot project run by the Quebec government to encourage development of the silent, fuel-efficient vehicles. Two companies - Nemo, based in Quebec, and Zenn, headquartered in Toronto - can operate their vehicles on roads in Quebec with speed limits under 50 km/h. They must also be outfitted with an orange triangle denoting a slower vehicle.

Ian Clifford, Zenn's CEO, says the project is an idea whose time has come as prices at the gas pumps drain consumers' wallets.

"You can almost track the hits to our website based on the increasing cost of gasoline," he said in an interview at the company's factory north of Montreal.

"There's a real convergence now of conditions that make electric drive the real sensible choice for the future.

"Electricity is our only sustainable fuel, if you think about it, on the planet and we believe that over the next five, six years we're going to see a massive adoption of electric vehicles on a global scale."

He said it would cost about a penny per kilometre to drive one of his company's vehicles, depending on driving habits.

The Zenn - which is short for zero emissions no noise - meets the low-speed vehicle safety standards and can travel for about 50 to 80 kilometres on a charge.

It plugs into a regular electrical outlet to recharge and is expected to cost around \$16,000. It's basically an urban car.

Clifford has a classic electric car built in 1959 which he used to drive. He decided to start building electric cars about six years ago when he couldn't find a new electric car from any other manufacturers.

He said Quebec is making a very positive, proactive step by allowing the electric cars on the road.

British Columbia passed legislation last month that allows the low-speed vehicles to be driven on 40 km/h roadways but did include provisions in its law to permit municipalities to enact bylaws to let low-speed cars travel on higher speed roads.

He said he had heard that more than a dozen municipalities had indicated to the province they wanted to increase access for the environmentally friendly vehicle, which has a top speed of 40 km/h.

Ontario has a five-year project for electric cars that limits them to provincial parks and provincial employees.

"We'd like to see a lot more movement in Ontario," Clifford said.

"Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and Alberta are all looking very seriously at the class and we hope to certainly see some movement from them in the coming months."

While the provinces decide what vehicles will be used on their roads, Transport Canada maintains strict standards on those vehicles for safety reasons. It had recommended that low-speed vehicles be used in gated communities and enclosed areas.

"What the main concern is is that the (low-speed vehicle) must meet a minimum level of safety, the Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards," said Maryse Durette, a Transport

Canada spokeswoman in Ottawa.

She said it has to bear a vehicle identification number to track ownership, a seat belt assembly and meet low-speed vehicle class standards, which include headlights, a windshield and a maximum speed of 40 km/h. A regular car has more than 40 standards to meet.

"When putting one of those vehicles in traffic with other vehicles, the safety issues are what are the concerns of Transport Canada," she said.

Catherine Scrimgeour, a Zenn spokeswoman in Toronto, laughed when she asked if Quebec's famously lead-footed drivers would adapt quickly to the low-speed vehicles.

"I believe the Quebec marketplace will respond very favourably," she said.

"Anyone who has ever sat behind the wheel of our electric car will appreciate the fact that it has fantastic off-the-line acceleration - better than any internal combustion vehicle - so I think the Quebec driver will be satisfied."