

City plugs into electric car technology

Côte des Neiges-N.D.G borough receives first ZENN car for municipal staff

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The Gazette

Saturday, September 27, 2008

What's bile green with an orange triangle in back, leaf logos on the wheels, goes 40 kilometres an hour and doesn't need gasoline? It's the city of Montreal's first fully electric car, unveiled yesterday morning in the Côte des Neiges/Notre Dame de Grâce borough.

Urban development employees working for the borough will use the ZENN (which stands for zero emissions, no noise) car to travel to projects in progress and conduct studies.

Borough mayor Michael Applebaum will also use it for special events, if the car is available.

The car cost the borough \$16,000.

"We went for the base model, no air conditioning, no radio and no sun roof," Applebaum said.

"It's very easy to drive and there's no sound, which is incredible," he added, after taking the little car for a spin around the neighbourhood.

The ZENN is expected to run 60 kilometres before it needs to be recharged.

Juicing up the car takes about eight hours and uses a regular 110-volt electrical outlet.

The ZENN was approved for Quebec roads in June, providing certain restrictions are respected. The car can only be used on roads where the speed limit does not exceed 50 kilometres per hour, hence the "slow vehicle" orange-and-red triangle on the back bumper.

The borough reduced the speed limit on roads to 40 kilometres an hour in 2005.

Applebaum said the purchase of the ZENN dovetails nicely with the borough's green plan, adopted in June, to become a more eco-friendly borough.

"Purchasing this vehicle respects our plan to find vehicles that have less impact on the environment," the borough mayor said.

"We also bought four bikes - two electric and two manual - for our employees to use for short distances and we are buying two hybrid Ford SUVs for the public works department." Eventually, the borough hopes to have eco-friendly dump trucks as technology makes them available, Applebaum added.

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