

## Background

In its [2040 Net Zero Framework](#), the Government of Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.) has goals of achieving a 100% zero-emission government-owned fleet and decarbonizing at least 40% of registered medium and heavy-duty vehicles by 2040. To achieve this, the government has envisioned electrifying half of the province's school buses by 2027, with an investment of \$40.3M for the purchase of electric school buses (ESBs) over the next five years.<sup>1</sup> Of this amount, \$6M has already been contributed to the [Investing in Canada Plan](#) which, along with equal funding from the federal government, has resulted in the purchase of 35 buses. Currently, **82 of the 322 buses in the fleet (25%) are electric.**<sup>2</sup>

## Why do we need to act now?

Accelerating the electrification of the school bus fleet could be an opportunity to achieve meaningful progress on P.E.I.'s climate targets while generating complementary health and economic benefits for the province.

It is estimated that one ESB could **reduce GHG emissions by 23 tonnes, which is equivalent to taking approximately five cars off the road.**<sup>3</sup> School bus electrification also holds significant potential to reduce diesel-related air pollutants (nitrous oxides, sulfur oxide, particulate matter), which primarily affect the health of bus drivers and of the **22,000 children** who ride the bus to school every day, as well as disadvantaged communities who are more likely to live near major roadways and thus daily bus routes.<sup>4</sup> These reductions could amount to substantial **savings in health care costs but also in energy and maintenance costs** for fleet managers, due to the lower cost of electricity compared to diesel and fewer parts of electric models. In light of the climate crisis, there is no reason to delay this transition that will benefit everyone.

## What are the main barriers?

- The **lack of charging infrastructure** (there are only 12 chargers for the fleet) due to installation delays and supply chain shortages, forcing fleet managers to share chargers and follow charging schedules to prioritize buses driving long distances;
- **Range loss concerns** due to headwinds, driving uphill and constant stop-and-go<sup>5</sup>;
- Among other challenges faced by the workforce are the **lack of information about the components** of ESBs, which leaves buses that need repairing out of service for longer periods, and the **lack of workforce training and support.**<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Government of Prince Edward Island. (2021). [Capital Estimates Fall 2021](#).

<sup>2</sup> CBC News. (2022). [P.E.I. adding more electric school buses, placing charging stations at drivers' homes](#).

<sup>3</sup> Government of Prince Edward Island. (2021). [Electric School Buses](#).

<sup>4</sup> CBC News (2021). ['It sounds like a great great plan': P.E.I. Green Party supports electric school buses](#).

<sup>5</sup> SaltWire. (2022). [P.E.I. electric school buses spark positives and negatives for drivers, school branch](#).

<sup>6</sup> World Resources Institute. (2022). [Progress from Our Northern Neighbors in Prince Edward Island, Canada](#).

## Recommendations

The P.E.I government's recent investment for electric school buses will certainly contribute to phasing out diesel-powered vehicles in the province. Its ambitious, but realistic vision of having 50% of its school bus fleet electric by 2027 must be accompanied by additional measures to maximize the climate, environment, economic and health benefits of school transportation electrification, and to support the transition and the people affected by it in order to ensure consensus around it. We recommend that the government of P.E.I.:

1. Increases planned investments in ESBs to accelerate the decarbonizing of its school bus fleet;
2. Increases accessibility to charging infrastructure through funding and support programs to meet the diverse needs of fleet operators, particularly those in rural and remote areas who often lack grid connection and must cover longer distances;
3. Provides financial support to assist fleet managers in operating and transitioning their bus fleets, particularly in planning their charging infrastructure needs;
4. Invests in the development of ongoing training programs for the workforce in heavy electric transportation.

We are available to provide more detail on these recommendations and to contribute to discussions on these issues.

### Contact

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## About CESBA

Led by Équiterre in partnership with Green Communities Canada, the **Canadian School Bus Electrification Alliance** (CESBA) is an initiative that brings together provincial and federal school transportation stakeholders – from school boards passing through environmental organizations to national health associations, to advocate for measurable policies that will accelerate the transition to a 100% zero-emission school bus fleet by 2040, in alignment with Canada's climate targets. [Website](#)

