

Context

In its [Plan pour une économie verte 2030](#), the Quebec government has committed to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 37.5% below the 1990 level and cutting petroleum product consumption by 40% by 2030. To achieve this, the government has committed to electrifying 65% of the school bus fleet and has required, since 2021, that every new school bus purchased be electric. It provides financial support to school transport providers for the purchase of electric school buses (ESBs), as well as for charging infrastructure. This assistance is available through various funding sources:

- **Programme d'électrification du transport scolaire (PETS)** : The Ministry of Transport and Sustainable Mobility (MTSM) offers up to \$125,000 for the purchase of an ESB and up to \$30,000 for the acquisition and installation of a charging station.
- **Transportez Vert** : As part of the support component, up to \$150,000 per year is provided for hiring specialists to assist in the planning of bus replacement, the procurement of charging stations, and energy management.
- **Ministry of Education (MEQ)** : The Ministry of Education provides an annual grant of \$7,900 to support the acquisition of ESBs and a one-time amount of \$5,000 per operated ESB.

As of September 2022, according to *Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec* data, there were **469 registered ESBs** in Quebec, representing **only 5% of a fleet of more than 10,000 school buses**.

Why do we need to act now?

Accelerating the electrification of the school bus fleet represents an opportunity to make significant progress in reducing GHG emissions in Quebec, while also generating benefits for the health and economy of the province.

In fact, it is estimated that electrifying the 10,000 school buses would **reduce GHG emissions by 800,000 tons**.¹ An entirely electric fleet could also reduce air pollution related to diesel that harms human health, thereby **saving approximately \$1 million annually in healthcare costs**.² This would especially benefit the health of drivers, the **550,000 children** who take the school bus every day, and the communities with low socio-economic status located near major roads and bus routes.³ According to a report by Équiterre, electrifying school transportation could also **improve the trade balance by 50 to 100 M\$** per year, as the current production of ESBs is concentrated in Quebec.

¹ Ministère des Transports. (2022). [Programme d'électrification du transport scolaire](#).

² Équiterre. (2019). [Autobus scolaires électriques: Impulser leur déploiement au Québec](#).

³ Fédération des transporteurs par autobus. (2022). [Le Transporteur. En route vers les négociations](#).

What are the main barriers?

Despite the potential gains that could be achieved through the adoption of ESBs, school bus operators remain hesitant about this transition; in the months leading up to the ban on the purchase of new internal combustion engine (ICE) buses, operators rushed to buy ICE models.⁴ This situation can be attributed to several challenges currently faced in the electrification of school buses:

- The **additional cost of \$55,000** for purchasing an ESB (after subsidies);
- The **regressive nature of the subsidy program**, which reduced from \$150,000 in 2021 to \$100,000 per ESB purchased this year;
- The absence of **ongoing training programs** for drivers and mechanics in handling electric vehicles;
- The **reliance on chartered trips** to make electric fleets financially viable;
- Concerns about **range and autonomy**, particularly in rural areas with longer routes and extreme cold weather conditions;
- The **inability to park and recharge the vehicle at home**, particularly for drivers who operate routes in rural areas;
- The **purchase subsidy only applies to buses assembled 100% in Canada**, limiting eligible models and manufacturers and exacerbating delivery delays;
- **Shortage of mechanical parts and service availability for repairs.**

Recommendations

The goal of achieving 65% ESBs by 2030 is indeed realistic and ambitious, but the Quebec government must ensure that additional measures and financial resources are implemented to address the identified issues and maximize the climate, environmental, economic, and health benefits of electrifying school buses in the province.

Based on the findings from the report [Réflexions pour une transition énergétique juste et efficace dans le transport scolaire](#) as well as interviews with stakeholders in the Quebec school transportation sector, we recommend that the government:

1. Restore the financial assistance amount for the purchase of an ESB to \$150,000 to account for inflation;
2. Launch an awareness campaign about the measures to support the electrification of school buses, promoting these incentives to school transportation providers and helping them plan for the transition of their fleet;
3. Collaborate with Hydro-Québec to reduce connection delays to the power grid;
4. Invest in the development of ongoing training programs for the workforce in electric vehicles, especially in the medium and heavy-duty transportation sector;
5. Provide financial assistance for charging infrastructure requests at the time of order placement to accelerate the start of installation works and the circulation of ESBs;
6. Broaden the eligibility criteria for bus models to reduce supply delays in Quebec and to not exclude models with more advanced technology;
7. Invest in research in the field of conversion for school transportation and ensure eco-responsible management of end-of-life school buses;

⁴ Radio-Canada. (2022, 4 mars). [Le programme d'électrification fait bondir de 74% la vente d'autobus thermiques.](#)

8. Explore the economic and energy potential of school buses in vehicle-to-grid (V2G) technology;
9. Systematize data collection in the field and information sharing among school transporters in the province.

We are available to provide further details on these recommendations.

Contact

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About CESBA

Led by Équiterre in partnership with Green Communities Canada, the **Canadian Electric School Bus 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](#)

