

## Program graduates ready to lead electric charge

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As electric cars finally make their way into the Canadian market, 45 local electricians are prepping themselves with the know-how to lead the electric charge in Halton.

Last week, Eaton Electrical celebrated the first graduating class of its electric vehicle (EV) charging technology program.

"This is where the industry is going," said James Hunt, one of the graduates, pointing to hybrid electric or plug-in electric vehicles. "To be at the forefront of that we need to know, as electricians, what's happening."

Hunt, who works at About Town Electric Inc., said he has seen massive changes in the green technology sector in the last couple of years. "It's something people have been asking about for years."

Scott Huckins of Precision Electric said as the driving range of EVs expand, we'll start to see a lot more of them on the road.

"There's one vehicle they mentioned here that can go 245 miles on a charge, and they charge in 30 minutes. That's amazing," he said from the graduation at Teatro Conference Centre in Milton. "As this technology progresses it will become the standard."

Eaton's marketing product manager Loreto Persichetti said he hasn't seen a huge demand for electric cars, which just recently made their debut in Canada with the launch of the Chevy Volt this month and the Nissan Leaf in September, but he expects that to change in the very near future.

"As more and more of these vehicles get sold, the more money gets generated for research and development and we'll see huge advancements in battery technology and huge advancements in charging equipment," he said.

The charging units manufactured by Eaton, whose Canadian headquarters are in Burlington, can communicate with the cars and have the ability to charge only on off-peak hours. The units are manufactured in the U.S. and will be integrated into Eaton's Milton manufacturing assembly line.

Persichetti said between 3,500 and 5,000 EVs are expected to be sold in Canada next year. The U.S. is aiming to have one million electric cars on the road by 2015.

"Both the Ontario and federal government have announced support for EV infrastructure. They are going to spend millions of dollars over the next few years."

Currently, the provincial government offers a rebate of \$5,000 to \$8,500 on a purchase or lease of a hybrid or plug-in EV.

Persichetti said in the next few years, he expects to see electric charging stations in parking lots and at service stations. "In Europe and Japan and market is larger, obviously because of fuel prices. But with an EV you're talking about cents per mile. If you were driving 50 to 100 km a day, it would cost \$5 to \$8 to charge your vehicle a week."

While the cost of an electric car is 15 to 20 per cent more than a traditional car, Persichetti said without an internal combustion engine the maintenance costs are a lot lower. "You don't have to worry about changing your oil, there are no moving parts."

But with any new technology, it takes time for the wider population to adapt.

Persichetti said "range anxiety" is perhaps the biggest roadblock for EVs.

"Does it fit into most people driving habits? Is 100 km a day enough to be able to get into your vehicle and drive?"

He said as the range per charge increases, and charging stations became a fixture at traditional gas stations, that range anxiety will begin to fade.

Huckins points out EVs aren't new technology, "it's old technology finally being utilized."

Added Hunt, "To think about this happening one day, and suddenly the future is here, is really special."



Eaton's marketing manager Loreto Persichetti (left), and two local grads James Hunt and Scott Huckins showcase a residential charging plug and charging station.