



Driver Profile

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Cold comfort: Why one Saskatoon resident swears by EV winter driving

By Jeannie Armstrong

Ken has no qualms about driving an electric vehicle (EV) in Saskatchewan winters. His trusty 2020 Chevrolet Bolt has proven to be a steadfast winter warrior.

The Saskatoon resident purchased the Bolt new in January of 2021, after talking with EV-driving friends. Based on their recommendations, he test-drove a Bolt and took the plunge. *“Our previous car, a 2002 Acura EL, had 250,000 kilometres on it and was pretty close to end of life,”* he says.

Ken also owns a gas-powered 2008 Toyota Tacoma truck, which he uses occasionally to haul bigger items that won't fit in his compact EV.

“We debated buying a plug-in hybrid instead of a full EV, but reasoned that if we need a gas vehicle, we have the Tacoma. That gave us the confidence to go fully electric and purchase the Bolt,” says Ken.

PLUGGING IN

Switching to an EV didn't require any modifications to his home. *“We park it outside in the driveway. For the first two years that we had it, we just plugged into the regular outlet and charged with that,”* says Ken. This method is also known as 'Level 1' charging.

In 2023, Ken and his partner Maryann undertook some home renovations. *“We decided that would be the time to run a new line out for a 240-volt system (for 'Level 2' charging). We installed the charger on the outside wall of our house,”* says Ken.

“In winter, we plug in every day. That allows the car to keep the battery at a good temperature. Like people, batteries don't like -30° C temperatures. In summer, we just plug in once or twice a week.”



FINANCIAL BENEFITS

The cost savings of EV ownership became quickly apparent. *“Once you get an EV, you realize how much money you're not spending on gas. I've got an energy tracker on our charger and home charging cost us about \$440 for the past year. That was for about 9,000 kilometres of driving, primarily within the city,”* he says.

Maintaining the EV is also less expensive, limited to seasonal tire changes, replacing windshield wipers, car washes and refilling washer fluid.

HIGHWAY TRAVELS

Long-distance trips in the Bolt have included Vancouver Island, Edmonton and Banff. One trip to Banff took the couple through a fierce winter storm. *“It was snowing and blowing, with highs of -20° C, but the Bolt handled really well,”* says Ken.

“Cold temperatures have never been a problem. When it’s cold, just plug it in, like you would with a gas vehicle, and it’s going to start, no problem. I also like that it warms up so quickly, faster than a gas vehicle.”

During his five years of driving an EV, Ken has noted vast improvements in charging infrastructure across Western Canada. *“Our first year, to travel to Vancouver Island we had to go through Moose Jaw so we could charge there, and then take the Trans Canada Highway to Calgary,”* he notes.

“Since then, charging infrastructure has really come on board. For example, between Saskatoon and Edmonton, there are now charging stations in North Battleford, Lloydminster and Vegreville.” For motorists travelling to Calgary from Saskatoon, Ken notes there are fast charging stations in Kindersley, Hanna and Drumheller.



THE MORE YOU KNOW

Thinking of making the switch to an EV? Ken advises talking directly with EV owners. He recommends joining the SasEV Facebook group, where members share factual feedback and information on all types of EVs.

“The biggest thing with an EV is if you can plug in at home. That can be a challenge for people who are living in condos or apartments or only have on-street parking. If you have a standard outlet, you can plug in and charge,” says Ken.

“The more information you can get, the better. I know it’s a leap and a bit scary. Now that I’ve done it, I’m not going back,” says Ken.

For more information about electric vehicles, please visit [Saskatoon.ca/EV](https://saskatoon.ca/EV).