



# Inspiration: How FLO and Canadian Tire Corporation are enhancing EV charging



**Sales of electric vehicles (EVs) continue to break records. In North America, 1.6 million EVs were sold in 2023, an increase of 47% from the year before. With the cost of EVs coming down and favorable tax credits now in place, this growth makes perfect sense and looks set to continue.**

Recognizing the growing EV trend, North American retailers are embracing the opportunity to drive preference with consumers by installing EV charging stations to service EVs while customers shop. Recent research found that 80% of EV drivers said available charging stations influenced their shopping decisions with a retailer. However, the key to successfully driving preference is the assurance that chargers are functional and reliable – if they aren't, retailers will quickly see customer dissatisfaction grow.

Finding reliable public charging is already a major challenge for EV drivers. A recent study revealed that satisfaction with public charging infrastructure has declined by 20% since 2021. As we look ahead, we know that retailers who address issues with charger uptime – the amount of time a charger is online and available for use – can truly provide an important service for a growing segment of customers. This playbook will explore the next step in EV adaptation: How can retailers secure the benefits of adding EV chargers while avoiding uptime and functionality pitfalls?





## Overcoming challenges to installing EV chargers

As a leading retailer, Canadian Tire, part of the Canadian Tire Corporation (CTC) group of companies, which includes Mark's, SportChek and Party City, started exploring this question in 2018. With close to 1700 retail and gas outlets nationwide and over 100 years in the business, Canadian Tire stores are an iconic feature of Canada's retail landscape. With a long history of serving customers with internal combustion engine vehicles through its automotive services and range of Canadian Tire Gas+ gas bars, Canadian Tire has also broadened its reach to ensure they are meeting the needs of EV drivers.

“Automotive is a heritage category for Canadian Tire retail stores, and as we have for the last century we will continue to evolve our service offerings to meet the needs of Canadian drivers as

many adopt EVs as their vehicles of choice,” says Andrea Ongaro, Divisional Vice President, Petroleum and Business Development, Canadian Tire Corporation.

In 2018, CTC initiated a pilot program in collaboration with Natural Resources Canada to install EV chargers at select retail locations. This strategic move involved partnering with multiple charging infrastructure partners, including FLO, a leading provider of EV charging solutions. From the outset, CTC recognized the value of FLO's expertise and cultural fit that mattered for their retail network.





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Divisional Vice President, Petroleum and Business Development,  
Canadian Tire Corporation

“When we connected with leadership at FLO, we felt we understood them and they understood us,” Ongaro says.

“It was one of the best decisions we’ve made in the EV space because FLO has been a great partner since day one.”

The collaboration between CTC and FLO began with 21 Canadian Tire retail sites and increased to include another 36 thanks to FLO’s end-to-end engagement during the process.

“Our partners at FLO understood that putting a charger in the ground is the easy part,” says Freida Rubletz, Manager of EV Charging Development, Canadian Tire Corporation.

As the two companies worked together to evaluate potential sites, FLO led efforts to obtain easements and collaborate with local authorities. This engagement throughout the planning and construction phases allowed Canadian Tire Associate Dealers to focus on providing the best experience for their customers.

## Acting as a partner to each retail location

As Canadian Tire Corporation and its Canadian Tire Associate Dealer network worked together to determine the best locations for EV chargers across the country, FLO handled the critical task of liaising with local utilities providers prior to installation. Electricity for EV chargers is separate from the power supply to a Canadian Tire retail location, so FLO worked with utility providers to install transformers, meters and other electrical infrastructure to ensure stores' power would not be disrupted.

Once chargers were installed, FLO maintained continuous support for the chargers by constantly monitoring their performance through its Network Operation Center (NOC). This control center monitors data from the EV chargers and identifies issues for repair. FLO technicians at the NOC then deploy maintenance staff to any location across Canada.

“We’re not just manufacturers – we’re network operators,” says Yann Benoit, Senior Director, Charging Network Operation, at FLO. “We manage the installation, but we also monitor our network, and we’re responsible for repairs,” he says.



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Senior Director, Charging Network Operation, FLO



Both FLO and CTC were committed to establishing streamlined communication throughout the project. Each partner provided a single point of contact, and the teams established weekly scrums to identify any repair issues or other challenges.

“Because FLO has such robust knowledge of the network and site activity, we’re able to manage any issues quickly,” says Rubletz.

“We have a portal to see each site’s status. FLO provides on-time monitoring and response, with most issues resolved before our weekly call.”

These activities don’t require action by individual retailers – FLO’s monitoring and service keep chargers up and running so that retailers don’t have to check on them or report issues only when customers can’t use the chargers.

“We design, build and monitor our charging stations, and we know them better than anyone else,” Benoit says. “We also ensure that the right technician with the right skills is deployed to service them. This is critical to keeping the uptime between at 98% plus, and it ensures there is very minimal impact to each Canadian Tire store.”

Charger reliability and outstanding uptime mean that Canadian Tire Dealers don’t have frustrated EV drivers coming into their stores. It also means they don’t have to find EV technicians themselves if something goes wrong – they have constant support so they can focus on running their business.





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**FREIDA RUBLETZ**

Manager of EV Charging Development, Canadian Tire Corporation

## Ensuring an outstanding customer experience

As one of Canada's most trusted brands, it was vital to CTC that the new infrastructure reflected its focus on customer experience and value - that it aligned with its brand purpose: **To make life in Canada better.**

FLO's deep knowledge of the market allowed them to meet customer needs such as bilingual signage and services throughout Canada. They focused on siting chargers in easily accessible parts of the retail properties where there was ample lighting. And, they developed a five-star app so that customers could easily find their nearest Canadian Tire location with available chargers.

This dedication to customer service built trust between CTC and FLO, since CTC could be confident that FLO would ensure a great customer experience at their retail locations. Customers with EVs have built trust that the network functions as well, as shown by the usage of chargers nationwide.

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FLO also wanted to ensure that chargers were in places that were convenient for retailers too; for example, avoiding snow disposal areas in parking lots. All of these considerations allow CTC to offer reliable charger services for customers while maintaining the high standards of its brand.

As their successes grew, FLO and CTC kept expanding its charger network, and by early 2024, they had 189 chargers at 68 locations with plans to add more in the near future.

# What's next for Canadian Tire and FLO

As the demand for EV infrastructure continues to grow, both Canadian Tire and FLO expect to continue building their network of charging stations across Canada.

“Our goal is to have the best charging network so that range anxiety disappears from coast to coast,” Benoit says.

Moving forward, the partners will leverage advanced technology to collect charger data and inform efforts that improve uptime.

As a result of their vertical integration encompassing manufacturing and network management, FLO has data on every charger at every location, and any issue or problem is logged in their system. By using machine learning for data analytics, they can more quickly evaluate repair times, parts usage, common failures and a range of other factors. These learnings also drive training efforts so that technicians can benefit from their colleagues' experience, even across different regional teams.

“Developing automation to measure problems and repair them faster, determining which spare parts are the right ones, figuring out how much time a certain repair takes – technology can help us manage all these activities so that we're always improving uptime,” Benoit says.





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Looking ahead, CTC recognizes the importance and impact continual innovation has on creating the best experience for Canadian Tire Associate Dealers and their customers. By partnering with industry leaders such as FLO, Canadian Tire continues to expand its EV offerings to position itself as the go-to source for Canadian EV drivers and ensures best-in-class customer experience across Canada.

“The proof is in our continued work with FLO,” says Rubletz. “We trust them to help us continue to deliver quality EV charging experiences for Canadians coast-to-coast.”

As Canadian Tire’s solutions provider for EV charging, FLO is positioned to help Canadian Tire make a difference amongst the growing population of EV drivers in the communities they serve.

Furthermore, with its evolving capabilities and high reliability, FLO is positioned to support Canadian Tire in scaling up its charging infrastructure in the future.

“Canadian Tire Corporation is very invested in the communities where they’re located,” Benoit says, “and FLO shares that community spirit. We’re all about working together, and we’re looking forward to it for years to come.”

**Contact FLO to discuss EV charging solutions for your retail locations.**



FLO is a leading North American electric vehicle (EV) charging network operator and a smart charging solutions provider. We help to overcome climate change and accelerate EV adoption through a vertically integrated business model and by delivering EV drivers the best charging experience from curbside to countryside. Every month, we enable more than 1.5 million charging events thanks to over 100,000 fast and level 2 EV charging stations deployed at public, private and residential locations. FLO operates its network across North America with facilities in Michigan and Quebec. Click below to learn more about what “EV charging done right™” means to us.

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