

McLaren Toronto Named No.1 Retailer Of Brand

City Outlet Outscores Other McLaren Retailers At 86 Locations In 31 Markets



McLaren Toronto has been named McLaren Automotive's Global Retailer of the Year 2017 in recognition of the highest standards of business operation, which contributed to a record year for McLaren Automotive in North America.

The Canadian retailer, part of Pfaff Automotive Partners, won

the overall top honor by outscoring McLaren retailers at 86 locations in 31 different markets around the world. All contenders were benchmarked and assessed in key areas - sales, customer service, aftersales and marketing.

In addition, four other McLaren North American retailers; McLaren Philadelphia, McLaren

San Francisco, McLaren Boston and McLaren Newport Beach were nominated to the exclusive Premier Club that recognizes the exceptional performance of the top 12 global retailers.

"I would like to congratulate McLaren Toronto on claiming the McLaren Global Retailer of the Year award," said Tony Joseph,

President of McLaren North America. "After taking the Regional Retailer of the Year honor in 2016, the Pfaff organization have succeeded in taking their performance in sales and service to a world-beating level in the last year. With record sales and great attention to detail, they continue to build McLaren's brand aware-

ness in this key market."

McLaren Toronto President and CEO, Chris Pfaff, added; "At Pfaff, we've built a community of people who love to own, drive, race and be inspired by great cars. We don't just sell cars; we deliver extraordinary automotive experiences - in every showroom, on the road, and on the track."

Race To Set Up Europe's Electric Car Charging Network

MUNICH: Charging an electric car away from home can be an exercise in uncertainty - hunting for that one lonely station at the back of a rest-area parking lot and hoping it's working.

In Europe, some of the biggest automakers are out to remove such anxieties from the battery-only driving experience and encourage electric-vehicle sales by building a highway network of fast charging stations. The idea is to let drivers plug in, charge in minutes instead of hours, and speed off on their way - from Norway to southern Italy and Portugal to Poland.

Much is at stake for the automakers, which include Volkswagen, BMW, Daimler and Ford. Their joint venture, Munich-based Ionity, is pushing to roll

out its network in time to service the next generation of battery-only cars coming on the market starting next year. They're aiming to win back some of the market share for electric luxury car sales lost to Tesla, which has its own, proprietary network.

Despite a slower than expected start, Ionity CEO Michael Hajesch told The Associated Press in an interview he's "confident" the company will reach its goal of 400 ultra-fast charging stations averaging six charging places each by 2020.

The idea is "to be able to drive long distances with battery electric vehicles, across Europe and to have the same experience at each station, meaning a very easy and comfortable customer journey," Hajesch said during a con-

versation at the company's Munich headquarters near the 1972 Olympic stadium.

The idea is to break electric cars out of the early adopter niche, in which they are charged slowly overnight at home and used for short commutes.

"The sites we are looking for are really the A-sites," he said, "directly at the autobahn. Not down the road, not driving five kilometres into the next industrial area and finding a charging station somewhere, without light, or any amenities around, but right at the autobahn."

"If you're going from Hamburg to Munich, because it's a weekend trip to friends, typically you do not have much time," he said. So what counts will be "the speed of recharging your vehi-

cles, and at the same time finding maybe some amenities: maybe a coffee, getting a newspaper or whatever."

Ionity opened its first station April 17 at a rest stop off the A61 highway near the small town of Niederzissen, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) south of Bonn in western Germany. The six high-speed chargers are operating in "welcome mode," meaning they're free until May 31. After that, Ionity plans to charge for the power, which it seeks to obtain from renewable sources. Ionity has agreements for some 300 sites, working with fueling station and rest stop landlords.

More charging availability is what it will take to get an environmentally aware car buyer like Rainer Hoedt to choose a battery-

only vehicle. The 58-year-old Berlin geography teacher is a proud owner of a Mitsubishi Outlander, a plug-in hybrid that combines internal combustion with a battery he can charge overnight. The battery-only range of 50 kilometres (30 miles) lets him drive emissions free for daily trips at home.

Tesla has shown how charging infrastructure can drive vehicle sales. It has 1,229 stations with 9,623 fast chargers in Europe alone, where it has cut into Mercedes and BMW's sales of luxury cars. But it has its own proprietary plug. Ionity is using the CCS plug backed by the European Union as a common standard for all.

Volkswagen will be building 300 highway charging sites in the U.S. by June 2019. - CP

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