

## Scion Comes to Canada

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On September 28, Scion launched across Canada, starting sales of Toyota's youth-oriented brand across an initial network of 45 dealers in the major urban hubs of Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal.

Automotive journalists got a preview of the vehicles at the brand launch in Vancouver but Canadians might already be vaguely aware of Scion, probably spotting distinctively styled models that were purchased south of the border by die-hard Scion fans.

Since Scion's 2002 launch in the U.S., sales there have swelled to a total volume of 800,000 with an enviable conquest rate of 70 percent of owners being new to the brand.

Scion also serves as a feeder brand to the Toyota and Lexus lineups as customers mature.

Which explains Toyota Canada's interest in bringing the marque north.

Although our "Echo-boomer" and "Generation Y" demographic bumps are apparently peaking later than in the U.S., the ranks of under-35 customers here are slated to swell to 40 per cent of all auto sales by 2020.

"The world is changing and brands that don't change with it will be left behind," Stephen Beatty, Managing Director for Toyota Canada told me.

Scion is responding to this new and demanding audience with a three-model selection – the xD, xB and tC.

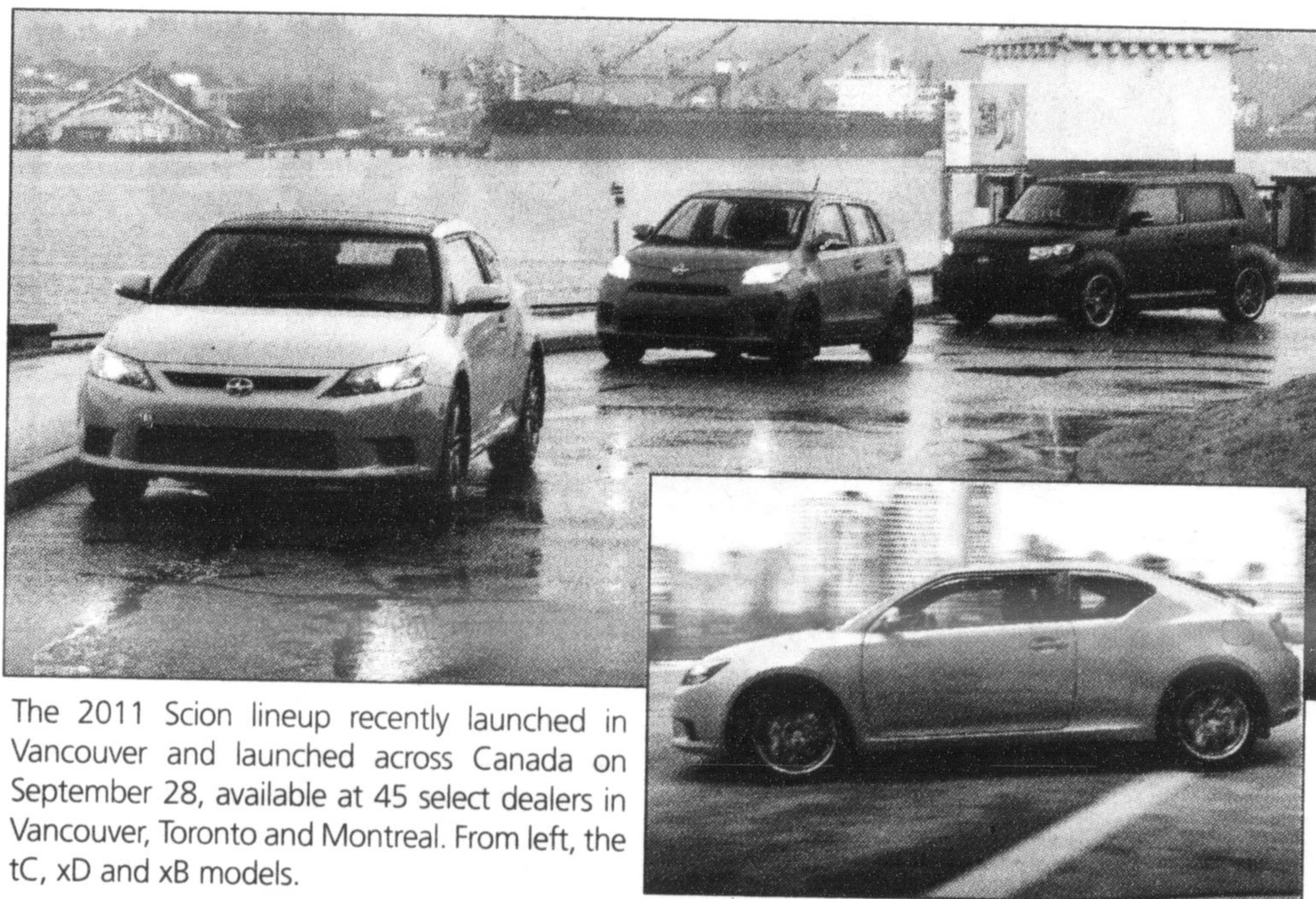
Those three sets of initials might seem confusing at first, but I developed a few mental tricks to separate the three models.

Think of the xD as "extra doors", a sub-compact five-door hatchback that combines versatility with nimble handling.

The xB, "extra boxy, extra big", is also a five-door hatchback but it is a larger compact urban utility vehicle, squarely styled with the shape that has become the iconic trademark of the brand. And picture the tC as "the coupe", a driver-oriented sporty car that adds extra levels of performance and equipment.

All three vehicles are "monospec" models.

"The only choices are transmission and



The 2011 Scion lineup recently launched in Vancouver and launched across Canada on September 28, available at 45 select dealers in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. From left, the tC, xD and xB models.

RIGHT: The 2011 Scion tC sport coupe is the most fully equipped car in the lineup, coming with a full suite of included amenities, an upgraded audio system and a panoramic moonroof, all for a starting price of \$20,850.

colour," Beatty added. "And I can tell you that beige ain't one of them."

But all three models come already-equipped with a superior slate of standard equipment including air conditioning, sport seats, keyless entry, tilt steering and cruise, power windows/locks/mirrors, 60/40 split folding rear seats and premium Pioneer AM/FM/CP six- or eight-speaker audio systems with MP3/iPod outlets.

And, with those well-loaded vehicles as a starting point, purchasers can personalize their rides from an on-line selection of more than 75 parts and accessories, including Toyota Racing Development (TRD) performance gear that, unlike aftermarket additions, will be covered under the car warranty.

Designed specifically for that youth market, all three models share common styling elements, a familial face that starts with thin, angular head-

lamps leading into a horizontally-slatted grille above a big lower air dam, the front end look bracketed by turn signals in the side view mirrors.

But there are differences, so let's touch on each model briefly, following the same order, from smallest to largest, cheapest to most expensive.

Scion xD 2011:

The xD five-door sub-compact hatchback, smallest in the lineup (for now), is based on the Yaris platform, powered by a 128 hp 1.8-litre four-cylinder with a five-speed manual or optional four-speed automatic. Fuel economy is rated a thrifty 7.4/5.9/6.7L/100km (city/hwy/comb)(5MT). The xD features few neat utility tricks to complement its nimble and sporty style - dual dash storage compartments, versatile fold-flat rear seats and an acceptable cargo capacity of 310 litres (10.9 cu.ft.).

Scion's brochure pictures aftermarket conver-

sions that could pimp this econo grocery-getter into anything from a streetwise custom machine to fully equipped rally racer style.

The 2011 Scion xD starts at \$17,200.

Scion xB 2011:

But when you're talking customization, the real blank canvas in the company lineup is the funky xB with a squared-off style that Scion categorizes as "the original, not the copy".

The xB compact urban utility vehicle was recently revised and is based on the Toyota Matrix platform, powered by a 158 hp 2.4-litre four-cylinder with, again, the choice of either the five-speed manual or optional four-speed automatic tranny. Fuel economy is rated at 9.5/7.2/8.4L/100km (city/hwy/comb)(5MT).

The boxy body and bulbous fender lines are instantly recognizable and the layout and dimensions translate into maximum headroom and interior space for a compact vehicle. The gauge package is centrally located (a la Yaris) and interior styling is clean and ergonomic with a dash storage shelf above the glove box.

The 2011 Scion xB starts at \$18,270. Scion tC 2011:

At first glance the tC sport coupe, with its traditional car-shaped architecture, seems the least original entry in the lineup. But when you think about it, Toyota hasn't had a coupe in their lineup since the Celica was dropped in 2005.

And those last Celicas, with power ratings comparable to the tC, listed with a price tag that was up to \$10K higher.

In fact, value for money should be the main theme here with (compared to the other Scion models) eight airbags instead of six, eight-speaker audio instead of six speakers, 18-inch alloys instead of 16-inch steel wheels, flat-bottomed sport steering wheel and an included panoramic moonroof, the kind of thing you'd normally only find on a fully-loaded Lexus ES350.

With a critical eye you can find some of the Scion savings that keep this car affordable with no auto headlamps, no auto climate, no engine cover (which won't bother customizers at all) and slightly cheaper interior plastics.

But I wouldn't consider it decontenting and the overall package remains spirited in performance and panache, a bargain for driving enthusiasts.

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