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Toyota brings the plug-in Prius PHV to Canada. One of five test plug-in hybrids currently being tested under Canadian conditions, the 2010 Prius PHV was recently driven by Canadian automotive journalist in Vancouver, B.C. The Prius PHV harnesses lightweight lithium-ion batteries and offers up to 20 kilometres of initial fuel-free EV electric driving at speeds up to 100 km/h before switching to hybrid mode.

Toyota is on a charge with the Prius Plug-In Hybrid

By **ROB BEINTEMA**
*Metroland Media Group
Carguide Magazine*

VANCOUVER, B.C.— “So, what are we averaging, now?” I asked my co-driver for the umpteenth time.

“About a half a litre per hundred kilometres,” she said, tapping the gauge, as if to point it out. Or perhaps in disbelief.

We were driving a 2010 Toyota Prius PHV (Plug-in Hybrid Vehicle), a hybrid that has, to put it simply, added a bigger battery that can be recharged through a household electric outlet in order to drive farther without using fuel.

This summer Toyota celebrated 10 years of the Prius hybrid in Canada. Naysayers might grump that Prius sales have been paltry compared to overall automotive market numbers, but the Prius has found a surprisingly large niche with “early intenders”, techno fans and eco-conscious drivers willing

to take a personal stance on sustainability.

Now, adding a plug-in version of the Prius might create a little initial confusion for those still unfamiliar with the hybrid concept.

“For the past decade, we’ve been explaining hybrids to consumers, assuring them that åno, you don’t have to plug them in,” said Sandy Di Felice, Director, External Affairs at TCI. “Now,” she added with a grin, “we have to tell them that, ‘yes, you do have to plug this one in.’”

But this next step in hybrid evolution has always seemed inevitable. From the start, Prius owners began clamoring for bigger plug-in batteries to extend the electric-only range. Some owners even sought out solutions in after-market conversion shops.

Toyota’s initial response was a Plug-in Prius Pilot, based on the second-generation Prius with added NiMH batteries and a potential 13km EV range. It was tested in Europe, Japan and the U.S. but it was just the first rung up the plug-in engineering ladder.

Last year’s unveiling of the third generation Prius

provided a more sophisticated platform for a further evolution of plug-in testing, resulting in this 2010 Prius PHV.

It features larger, lighter, and more powerful lithium-ion battery packs, controlled through a new power management system that enables an electric-only range of more than 20 kilometres and a top speed of almost 100 km/h without using a drop of gasoline.

How does it work?

The lithium-ion battery mass is substantially larger than that of a regular Prius hybrid. Even though the batteries are lighter, their mass weighs in at 300 lbs instead of 100 lbs. And they make about four times the electric power of a regular Prius.

Actually, it’s best to think of the layout as a three-battery-pack system. The first two packs are responsible for the initial 20 kilometres of electric-only driving.

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